



Curating the City as Non-Institutionalized Space

The contemporary art world is an ever-changing, fast paced arena of change, exploration, interrogation and expression. Throughout time the museum/gallery acted as a vehicle to deliver creative practice to the public; an accepted arena for exhibitions and cultural institutions, the museum and gallery has found its position in society. However, the paramount of contemporary arts and cultural expression has suffered its relevancy as times and technologies progress. The museum and gallery has developed an empty rhetoric, no longer the spokesperson of urban and cultural progression within contemporary arts. Often veiled under showpiece architecture, with state-funded motivations as centres of urban regeneration, the museum and gallery are succumbing to the latest institutional trend emerging from the urban grain. The New Institutionalized City has been borne.

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MA Curatorial Practice

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Brief

The contemporary art world is an ever-changing, fast paced arena of change, exploration, interrogation and expression. Throughout time the museum/gallery acted as a vehicle to deliver creative practice to the public; an accepted arena for exhibitions and cultural institutions, the museum and gallery has found its position in society. However, the paramount of contemporary arts and cultural expression has suffered its relevancy as times and technologies progress. The museum and gallery has developed an empty rhetoric, no longer the spokesperson of urban and cultural progression within contemporary arts. Often veiled under showpiece architecture, with state-funded motivations as centres of urban regeneration, the museum and gallery are succumbing to the latest institutional trend emerging from the urban grain. The New Institutionalized City has been borne.

Borne in opposition to the civic powerhouse of the museum and gallery, new institutionalization acts as multi-layered and programmed collectives where contemporary art and practitioners can explore, play and create. At centres of communities, these new institutions are growing as a way to bring practices together, fostering accessibility and transparency for those involved. They also respond to the current economic climate, developing businesses and collective initiatives for practitioners and spectators to engage with, and in turn regenerate their communities organically. Almost as retaliation, the museum and galleries are recognising the impact of a new institutionalized state, and see this as an opportunity to reach out to their communities on a wider

scale. Situations where partnerships have begun between the museum/gallery and the new institution have emerged; where sometimes the museum/gallery has replicated the forward-thinking and progressive arena for interchange themselves, implanting their own set-up within the urban grain.

Collating the factors that contribute towards these new ‘cells’ or ‘institutions’, and attempting to understand their necessity, complementary and/or ambivalent qualities that they bring towards contemporary arts, the following paper attempts to interrogate the factors that contribute towards new institutionalized spaces within the city, and questioning this emerging framework of contemporary arts on an urban scale. Is the city becoming unintentionally curated? Are we curating our urban environments and non-institutionalized space? Are new institutionalized spaces enough, or are we curating a fragmented landscape of interrogation?

Mirroring the make up of contemporary arts and urban frameworks, this research is organized into five separate sections. Firstly, the research will investigate its context; the context of contemporary arts theory and surrounding urban frameworks. Marrying this factor alongside curatorial practice, the context section redefines the varied strands of interrogation, providing a suitable framework in order to understand how the city becomes a network non-institutionalized space.

Chapter one explores new gallery practices and the fundamental shift in institutional and practitioners intentions for display and programming. This follows into chapter two, where such enterprise has challenged the traditional exhibitionary format is explored in order to develop an understanding of new institutionalist curatorial programming and practice.

Chapter three addresses situations where institutions have sought to react to such motivations; developing their own curatorial initiatives and appropriating new institutionalist approaches to contemporary arts. Chapter three also acts as a defence of the larger institution; understanding approaches that adopt new institutionalist thinking, and seek to engage with the community on an urban scale.

By way of concluding this paper, chapter four collates the findings in order to understand new institutionalism’s curating of the urban grain.

Through their inception as satellite institutions within the city, working in parallel to the centralized institution of note, it is hoped chapter four will understand how spaces of the city are being re-utilized in order to transmit contemporary arts into their communities.

Negotiating this research through complex sectors of curatorial practice, urban frameworks and new institutionalism, it is hoped that the act of curating can be understood further; on an institutional level, but also on a community and urban-wide scale. A series of complex engagements unfolds, however, by re-assessing the curatorial role in the wake of new institutionalism’s rise. Curatorial practice no longer is hermetically sealed by its architectural elements, instead it has to respond autonomously, but also with a focus on the bigger picture; the city, community and contemporary arts.

Context

Departing on research into non-institutionalised spaces within our urban environments blurs many fields within its core; contemporary art and practices, exhibitionary typologies, institutionalised museology and discourse, curatorial programming, architecture, urban planning, and cultural and sociological desires.

Anticipation at inception allowed for a merging of the museum and new institutionalism and the city, framed and underpinned through curatorial practice. However, immediately the research contains highly subjective and cyclical processes that require a series of refined and complex engagements throughout its interrogation. The contemporary art world and especially its engagement with the spectator and practitioners, is a definite representation of these factors that allows for this research to be conducted. Many authors¹ have already begun to unpack the issue of new/non/neo institutionalism and the contemporary museum counterpart. At a parallel, however, runs an ongoing discourse within contemporary art within our urban environments beginning with *Duchamp*, *The Situationists*, and, more recently, other practitioners' involvement, such as architects and urban planners.

As the research encompasses such varying parameters, it was imperative to define terms from surrounding theory and literature in order to regulate the breadth of research. These terms are as follows;

- I. **New Institutionalism;** *what is it? how does it exist within contemporary arts? who is involved? What actors are involved? Who are the protagonists?*
- II. **Urban Frameworks;** *how are we relating the institution to the urban frameworks? Interchange and synthesis of exchange?*
- III. **Curatorial practice;** *What actually is curatorial practice on an institutional and urban scale? what impact does it have in relation to new institutionalism and urban frameworks?*

Contemporary New Institutionalism

New institutionalism is a fundamental concept in approaching this research, and an area that is studied ever increasingly. New institutionalism, sometimes prefixed by new, non and neo, is an area of theory re-appropriated from sociology and usually witnessed in politics and economics, and now implemented throughout contemporary art. It has a particular resonance in today's continually fluctuating economic, social and cultural climate; one of institutional outreach into people's lives and communities. *DiMaggio and Powell*, sociologists and experts within this field, stated in 1983, that one of the institutional views that have emerged, has argued that institutions have developed to become similar isomorphism's across organisations even though they evolved in different ways, and how institutions shape the behavior of agents (i.e. people, organizations, governments)². What this illustrates, and witnessed today, is contemporary art institutions morphing their cognitive functions – in order to operate as re-defined vehicles to reach outwards to the spectator and practitioner. The urban and contemporary arts landscape has been shifted by new institutionalism; ruptured by 'new' institutional typologies that are embedded in our communities and ran autonomously, almost as retaliation to major museums and galleries.

Curators have recognized the shift in contemporary arts management and have responded. The curator *Jonas Ekeberg*, and editor of *kunsteritikk.no*, released a publication with the title "*New Institutionalism*", in which he defined this subject as an "attempt to redefine the contemporary art institution [...] ready to let go, not only of the limited discourse of the work of art as a mere object, but also of the whole institutional framework that went with it", stating

new institutionalism was "far from peripheral, but rather central, even crucial, to the contemporary art scene"³. New institutions of contemporary art exist within the shadow of conventional institutions; yet both are subject to behave according to broader market conditions. In this case, the contemporary art world and its economics in terms of funding, curatorial remit and discourse.

New institutionalism has a variety of sub-fields that describe the current institutional typologies. Firstly, historical institutionalism describes *Carol Duncan's* view of 'necessary, fixtures of a well-furnished state'; the 'art museum as ceremonial monument'⁴. The 'traditional' school trip museum/gallery, for example, *The National Gallery*, *Bristol City Museum* and various other major cities across the UK and perhaps, as a hangover of regenerative and tourist predilections, branches of the *Tate* flagships. The larger, civic institution of the art museum/gallery has an established agenda based on its development and future goals. 'Mission statements' and 'institutional goals' exemplify traditional museum practice, consequently holding a path dependency; a path than can lead to self-perpetuating iterations of curatorial programming. Dependant on funding throughout, and the availability of a permanent or temporary collection, or indeed the restrictiveness of those collections, historical institutionalism restricts any civic institution. Historical institutionalism however, does not hold that pathways will be adhered forever; a result of external contributors and/or junctures of change.

The opposite theory, primarily concerned throughout this research, is actor-centered institutionalism. Actor-centered institutionalism or new institutionalism fosters autonomy at the core of its construct as an institution. Cores of their society, *Howlett* and *Ramesh* deem new institutions as having a greater influence on human behaviour coming from the socio-political environment surrounding people and organizations than from within individual or group based interactions⁵. More and more, these contemporary institutions are burgeoning within the urban environment, *Furtherfield*, *Bristol Diving School*, *Chisenhale Gallery*, *Situations* and longer-established institutions such *Spike Island* are examples of such autonomy. *Claire Doherty*, curator and director of *Situations*, and a leading voice on new institutionalism describes these institutions' constructs and programming as responding to (some might even say assimilating)

the working methods of artistic practice and furthermore, artist-run initiatives, whilst maintaining a belief in the gallery, museum or arts centre, and by association their buildings, as a necessary locus of, or platform for, art⁶. Re-enforced by *Peter Bürger*, as a space of social groups, defined by a relative autonomy as well as certain practices and conventions, then it becomes obvious that the anti-institutional organization and the traditional institution have much in common⁷.

The curator *Charles Esche* (now Director of Eindhoven's *Van Abbemuseum*) furthers the role of new institutionalism within contemporary arts, echoing the change alluded to by *Doherty* and *Bürger*,

'Now, the term 'art' might be starting to describe that space in society for experimentation, questioning and discovery that religion, science and philosophy have occupied sporadically in former times. It has become an active space rather than one of passive observation. Therefore the institutions to foster it have to be part-community centre, part-laboratory and part-academy, with less need for the established showroom function.'⁸

New institutionalism is prevalent and a catalyst for discourse surrounding contemporary arts management and exhibitions. Directors and curators recognize *Esche's* idea of fostering multi-layered programming, shying away from traditional curatorial and museology frameworks. *Farquharson*, curator and critic writing for *Freize*, supports *Esche* stating that,

'One of the defining traits of 'new institutions' is that exhibitions no longer preside over other types of activity. In the conventional *kunsthal* the exhibition is primary, the centre that other activities (catalogues, guides, tours and so on) support. The 'new institution' instead places equal emphasis on a range of other functions'.⁹

Subsequently, the aforementioned curators recognize the fact of new institutionalism proclaiming a new methodology that seeks to

participate with other actors (i.e. practitioners – artists, curators, spectators, back-office staff, volunteers and others) throughout its artistic engagement. New institutionalism works on the premise that no one area takes precedence over any other; for example, exhibitions or seminars taking ownership of the institution itself, rather working within a formulated synthesis of programming.

As an underpinning to the contemporary trend within this research, it is worth noting that new institutionalism is not a new paradigm, and not just borne out of early twenty-first century discourse and experimentation. *Doherty* goes at great length to recognize art historian *Alexander Dörner* as a proponent of new institutionalism and perhaps foreseeing the institutional shift towards a *series of institutions*. Director of Landemuseum, Hanover in the 1920's, *Dörner* proposed the 'museum on the move' and famously suggested, 'the new type of art institute cannot merely be an art museum as it has been until now, but no museum at all. The new type will be more like a power station, a producer of new energy'¹⁰.

Yet the contemporary version of New Institutionalism differs debates witnessed in the late 1990s¹¹, which recognized a number of critiques such as the rise of the independent curator¹² and regenerative drivers of economy and culture, *Doherty* defines contemporary new institutionalism as a convergence of three defining factors:

- I. Firstly, relational and/or socially-engaged practices emerge as dominant strands of mainstream contemporary visual art through theoretical discourse and social networks;
- II. Secondly, cultural experience becomes recognized as a primary component of urban regeneration and the consequent influx of considerable funds for newly built spaces for contemporary art leads to a reconsideration of the role of museums and galleries.
- III. Thirdly and perhaps most significantly, within the context of an increasingly ubiquitous biennale culture, a generation of nomadic curators and artists emerge through whom new experimental models of presentation are circulated and exchanged.¹³

Doherty's factors, combined with *Esche's* 'part-community centre, part-laboratory and part-academy'¹⁴, appropriately describes new institutionalisms' coveting of participation, where its synthesis can be summarized by *Claire Bishop*; author, critic and curator. She argues that,

'...shared production is also seen to entail the aesthetic benefits of greater risk and unpredictability. Collaborative creativity is therefore understood both to emerge from, and to produce, a more positive and non-hierarchical social model'.¹⁵

This links itself with *Bishop's* viewpoint is *Nicolas Bourriaud's Esthetique Relationelle*, in which *Bourriaud* discusses the synthesis between performative art and its social repercussions. Mirroring with *Bishop* and extending further into the city and urban frameworks, *Bourriaud* describes the resonating factor within the museum, the spectator and artefact.

'Once raised to a power of an absolute rule of civilisation, this system of intensive encounters has ended up producing linked artistic practices: an art form where the substrate is formed by inter-subjectivity, and which takes being-together as a central theme, the "encounter" between beholder and picture, and the collective elaboration of meaning.'^{16 17}

New institutionalism responds to the timely image of the museum as cultural fulcrum, and reacts within its programming, seeking to respond as a platform for the development or catalyzing of discourse; a self-reflexive discourse that contemplates the current status of the institution's identity¹⁸. By beginning their own *institutions*, new institutionalism redefines and unpacks the utopian ideal of the museum as a hybrid place in which the production of intellectual (and perhaps political) discourse unfolds alongside the presentation of art practices and other forms of cultural production¹⁹ – a notion discussed by curator *Joshua Decker* in his *Synergy-Museum* lecture. Also, as *Kastner* summarises, and raised by *Steyerl*²⁰, new institutionalism, historically, and in particular, contemporary *new institutionalism* operates, as a new form of institutional criticism and discourse was a new social movement within the arts scene, propelled and inspired by social movements

outside of the art field²¹. Here we can make an astute assumption that new institutionalism works under the two premises:

- A. New institutionalism works as a socially geared conduit between its local contexts, or local communities, and seeks to synthesize contemporary arts and expertise of the any actors that engage with the process.
- B. The engagement of its local community, or rather in this case, the accessibility of new institutionalism through its diverse programming, allows for political and hierarchical boundaries to be reduced. Therefore, allowing the spectator, or other actors, to engage culturally or through other methods, i.e. discourse, workshops, meetings and small enterprises.

Perhaps as a closing note on new institutionalism's transparency as an institution, that also makes a subjective link to communities within our urban frameworks, *Oliver Marchant* notes in his article on the *Politics of Biennialization*, the institutions of the art world are not the only ones, but they are important hegemony machines, that indeed reproduce middle-class dominant culture, but also make it vulnerable²². New institutionalism serves as a modern approach to collaboration and operation as institution; it reduces inaccessibility and promotes multi-disciplinary working. As *Weider* suggests, individual exhibitions are no longer the focus of a cultural institutions, rather the development of a clear and identifiable institutional profile that is made visible²³; in this case, visible to the community and any actors involved.

As a result, we can define new institutionalism within the research. New institutionalism is a rupture within contemporary arts and museology; it represents the organic and community-led approach to making, thinking and doing. Accessible to all, and open for constructive dialogues, new institutionalism opens the door for exchange, experiment and synthesis of community, artist and audience. A conduit that reduces any hierarchical model that presents the opportunity for multi-dimensional programming.

The Urban Framework

At this stage in the methodology and literature review, the marrying

of new institutionalism and urban frameworks seems appropriate. The research encountered regarding new institutionalism makes leaps beyond its four walls, or architectural form, through social engagement and actor involvement. The resultant findings also link with historical museology within our cities and urban frameworks, which will underpin contemporary new institutionalism, allowing the research to move forward into investigating the city as non-institutionalised space.

Tradition dictates that within contemporary museology, institutions throughout our cities are perceived as the cultural hub of the city. Decades of building, extensions and regeneration projects have centralised the museum as the centre point for our societies' cultural competency and development; most notably, the *Bilbao effect* courtesy of the *Guggenheim* and *Frank Gehry*. However, the institution must act within our changing contemporary flux of society and technology as not so much a built structure, but as the complex material as well as the immaterial structural framework that defines the fields of work of an institution²⁴ – an observation by *Wieder*, that links beyond the architecture of the museum and into our urban frameworks.

Without being submersed into architectural typologies of building etc, we are primarily concerned with the shift from traditional museology to new institutionalism's role within our urban frameworks. *Nikolaus Hirsch*, curator, artist and probably most importantly for this research, professor of architecture, describes the convention of the orthodox museum institution as a stable axis of cultural engagement and recognises the field for those institutions to alter their approach within their urban frameworks.

'Institutions identified with the traditional kunsthalle model define a highly controlled environment: a hermetically closed and neutral interior in a stable architectural framework. (...) Spatially unstable institutions, on the other hand, aim for a fusion with their urban everyday surroundings. They are defined by flexible, dynamic borders and temporarily adopt existing territories and spatial vacancies in the city, however, of turning into event-based activities under the premises of neo-liberal deregulation.'²⁵

This point, linking the social continuity and shift in new institutionalism's behavioural programming, is furthered, suggesting that a chance to

develop a new typology: a growing kunsthalle that takes the changed artistic, social, economic conditions at face value, using them as a point of departure for its spatial-architectural strategy²⁶. Aware of our urban frameworks i.e. the street, the square, roads, interstitial spaces, landmarks, public transport routes and the traversal of people around the city, we are aware of contemporary change surrounding us at a variety of scales and formats (business, brands and the internet). The museum once stable in its city, finds new satellite strands of activity taking place within the urban framework; these operate as new institutionalism in practice.

When discussing urban frameworks, *Hirsch* highlights the architectural typology witnessed in planning processes and citywide sprawl. The art institution, from its classical form, to the new and contemporarily accepted format of the "white cube", is no longer safe as a centralised hub of cultural expression. This is supported by *Richter* and *Weider*, whereupon a new form of practice exists that opposes an all-encompassing decontextualization and a tendency to glorify the museum²⁷. This factor aligns itself with urban theory in relation to post-modernist cities. *Phil Hubbard* in his study of the city in relation to urban and social theory, *City*, highlights the issue that the museum has shifted from being the central locus within our urban frameworks, parallel to other sectors witnessed in the city.

'Many commentators have emphasized that the post-industrial city is characterised by new types of industrial space, what is perhaps most significant about post-industrial cities is that they are organised around consumption rather than production²⁸. (...) Manifest in a plethora of spaces of mainstream and alternative consumption (malls, multiplexes, cafes, festival marketplaces, nightclubs, super-casinos, heritage parks, museums), the implication is that the post-industrial city is subject to a new logic of social control (...)'.²⁹

Our urban frameworks exist within the modern world as blurred boundaries between economy, social and cultural predilections, where our subject, the museum/gallery at the centre of these urban frameworks, have become prominent catalysts that contribute towards a counter-intuitive urban framework of cultural collectivity and responsiveness. A facet of everyday life, and the traversal of spectators

or practitioners within our cities, where the local atmosphere of creativity cultivated by creative individuals fuels a *collective creativity*: local cultures shape the nature of economic activity, while economic activity becomes an integral and dynamic component of local social life³⁰. This is the link between new institutionalism and the urban frameworks that govern our society. Nevertheless, our urban frameworks also carry material approaches that we must consider in relation to non-institutionalised space. Proposed by *Hubbard*, these are fourfold:

- I. Representations of the city carry material weight, with the symbolic forms and languages of city space entering into the creation of its (so-called) 'real' spaces.
- II. City spaces are created and transformed through material practices which are, in many cases, beyond representation.
- III. Urban spaces are material networks enrolling a multiplicity of actants, where the latter includes both human and non-human actors.
- IV. Urban spaces are more or less 'stretched-out', and have a material existence that problematises extant ideas of geographical scales.³¹

Hubbard's proposals resonate with *Dexter's* 'utopia' of the contemporary institution, where the material texture of the city becomes the host of the discursive museum, and the discursive museum a host for the city – an interpenetration of urban identities, an exchange of cultural positions, an interface of public interests³². We can establish that urban frameworks are in a direct relationship to the contemporary museum/gallery; resulting in a reciprocal cultural interchange. However, new institutionalism develops upon the centrifugal exchange of ideas – repositioning the institutional constituents in order for a series of cultural voices *within* a wider framework of exchange.

Yet, this interaction has been witnessed before. During the 1990s, the *YBA's* (*Young British Artists*) initiated a form of new institutionalism with the urban framework of London at the time. Significantly, this network included artists, patrons (most notably, *Charles Saatchi*) and institutions, with particular seats of learning (*Goldsmiths College*) implicated, alongside exhibition spaces (the *ICA*, *White Cube* and *Tate Modern*)³³. This take

on creativity implies that artistic creativity may be embedded in social networks which are spatially localised³⁴. Nevertheless, with the fame of the *YBA's* and their ironic exhibitionary draw to major institutions today, our urban frameworks are littered with similar ruptures of *non-institutionalism*. Yet, the interaction between constituent actors has been lost through urbanisation, regenerative processes and perhaps simple forgetfulness. Our urban frameworks have lost their relative properties, centralised by the showpiece, resulting in reactionary institutions.

Of course, the urban frameworks that house our '*institutions of note*' are highly susceptible to post-modern colonization, where our cities are complex patchworks of communities radiating outwards to the cities peripheries. The notion of *sense of place* and whose is it in terms of relativity, becomes an element that contributes to our urban frameworks fragmenting themselves, entwined within issues of economy and cultural identities. As *Brian O'Doherty* notes in *Inside the White Cube*, with postmodernism the gallery space is no longer 'neutral'. The wall becomes a membrane through which aesthetic and commercial values osmotically exchange³⁵. Where its apparent neutrality is an illusion. It stands for a community with common ideas and assumptions³⁶. Therefore, the gallery, and henceforth, the museum, is an architectural convention that is subject to contradiction within our urban frameworks. How can they act as our centralised cultural counterpoints when their fabric is engrained with selective community ideals? *O'Doherty* also goes on to note that;

'It subsumes commerce and aesthetics, artist and audience, ethics and expediency. It is in the image of the society that supports it, so it is a perfect surface off which to bounce our paranoia's. That temptation should be resisted'.³⁷

Here we can note that our definition of urban frameworks contains highly contested issues of the gallery as pinnacle of society, economic transitions and politicization of the city. These issues all are modern criticisms that shroud a centralised issue of heterotopias. Raised by *Michel Foucault* in 1967, heterotopias exist in contrast to utopias. Utopia presents society in its perfected form, yet utopias are fundamentally unreal spaces^{38, 39}. However, *Foucault* presents heterotopias that are reminiscent of the contemporary urban framework, and the challenges it faces towards new institutionalism within contemporary arts, where heterotopias are capable of juxtaposing in a single real place several

spaces [*the city, our urban framework*], several sites that are themselves incompatible⁴⁰ [*new institutionalism?*]. Foucault's thinking resonates and links together the incompatibility of the urban framework mentioned by Hubbard⁴¹ and Decter⁴², with the utopian ideal of the contemporary arts gallery and organisation raised by Hirsch⁴³, O'Doherty⁴⁴ and Richter and Wieder⁴⁵.

Therefore our urban frameworks can be defined as the constructs of the city, linking the institution between its society and peripheries. Our patchwork of heterotopias, fragmented through modernization, economy and politicization. The wider construct that links the material, the subjective, space and non-space, architectural conventions of place, traversal and living, to the ground level resonance to the public, spectator, audience, actants and curator.

Curatorial Practice In The City

Yet, where does curatorial practice underpin new institutionalism within the urban framework? Doherty raises this issue stating that through the act of curating, ergo interacting with art and audience whereby,

‘...curatorial initiatives which seek to engender such interactions must begin to unpack the terminologies we use to distinguish one project from each other. For example, those artists who invite participation, often through a complicit engagement with their subject, but who essentially remain the signatories of their work (*Thomas Hirschhorn, Phil Collins, Santiago Sierra*), from those who embed themselves within the social fabric of a city through intervention (*Francis Alÿs, Minerva Cuevas, Roman Ondák*), from those who work collaboratively effecting a kind of ‘social sculpture’ (*Superflex, WochenKlausur*). So, to speak of an exhibition as a ‘projection’ which ‘oscillates between domesticity and the realm of social relations’ necessitates less an unpacking of the ethics of artistic engagement than on a differentiation between types of engagement and the necessary curatorial strategies to support these divergent approaches.’⁴⁶

As Bourriaud notes, the role of the curator or commissioner as mediator

becomes vital⁴⁷. However, within new institutionalism, the curatorial role is not the same as the classical gallery curator. New institutionalism's key component requires integration and synthesis of collaboration. Curatorial practice has to be responsive to its respective institutions' arsenal, in this case the opportunity for collaboration cannot be overshadowed by a permanent collection or funding availability. *Lars Larson* elaborates on this, stating that the distinction between art and other realms of knowledge is made operative in the osmotic exchange between different capacities to do things, which opens up the creation of new subject positions and articulations of democratic equivalence⁴⁸. Art and the art institution as resource become frames for activity that is real, because social interaction and the observation of its effects are allowed without conceptual rigidity⁴⁹.

The curatorial practice witnessed throughout this research is a concerted effort to re-establish traditional roles, somewhat troubled by the overbearing issue of new institutionalism renegotiating and recombining diverse typologies, where projects are to be seen as exploring the role of cultural institutions as political and social agencies in the contemporary city⁵⁰. The role of curatorial practice within new institutionalism morphs, connecting the content within the accessible sphere of interhuman relationships. Where works bring into play modes of social exchange, interaction with the viewer inside the aesthetic experience he or she is offered, and processes of communication in their concrete dimensions as tools that can be used to bring together individuals and human groups⁵¹. A heightened focus on responsiveness to immediate context of actants within the institution, the audience, the artist, production, local community and the wider scale of institutions within urban frameworks. Curatorial group, *What, How and For Whom? – WHW – Ivet Curlin, Ana Devic, Natasha Ilic and Sabina Sabolovic* – recognise the multi-faceted approach of exhibition making, institution making, and the wider production of meaning and knowledge. They state of their curatorial practice

‘...forms of a unique emotional and physical experience, the main task of a curator (...) would be to create the context, the discursive and physical space for reflection, a temporary point in which all these parallel processes are collected, contested, intensified and enhanced. For our curatorial work of key importance is the articulation of sensitive social issues, especially in relation to the local context.’⁵²

Yet, it is worth noting, the wider context of urban frameworks here are not primarily concerned with curatorial practice within its fabric such as site-specificity or public arts provision⁵³ summarised by *Dexter* where the utilization of the city-space as an environment for the development of art exhibitions has also been an effort, fundamentally, to expand and rethink the interrelationship between art production and the broader cultural-social realm⁵⁴. It would be ignorant to devalue the potential and positives that Biennialization⁵⁵ brings to any city and on a variety of scalar quantities, yet it is resultant of a curatorial practice that is not the proposed action here. Instead, curatorial practice, shifts from the exhibition making and programming of structure, into the realm of the city's urban framework; new institutionalism creating an *avant-garde* form of *curatorial practice*. In this realm it is not the curator curating; new institutions are contributing and reciprocating institutional identities into a wider urban framework. *Möntmann* alludes to this possibility, where networks of cultural exchange are positive and collaborative, whereby,

‘...reconciling their hierarchical structures of organization with the flexible, partially decentralized and transnational flows of culture, finance and labour. The advantage of “organized networks” instead is the way they function as “social-technical forms that co-emerge with the development of digital information and communication technologies.”’⁵⁶

Therefore, curatorial practice can be redefined for this research. Curatorial practice being liberated from the contemporary discourse within the institution, in favour of new institutionalism acting autonomously to present a new form of curatorial practice, one that governs the urban framework; presents a rich fabric of cultural exchange and expression. However, this is not a rejection of conventional curatorial practice, but an appreciation of the structure and strategies that emanate from new institutionalist approaches. It is a facilitator of exchange, synthesis of ideas, diminishing hierarchical modes of inaccessibility and an expression of collaborative networks, encompassing actants and communities.

As a result, the following definitions are born that are to be the underpinning of the following research into curating the city as non-institutionalised space.

- I. **New institutionalism:** *a rupture within contemporary arts and museology; it represents the organic and community-led approach to making, thinking and doing. Accessible, and open for constructive dialogues, new institutionalism opens the door for exchange, experiment and synthesis of community, artist and audience.*
- II. **Urban frameworks:** *the constructs of the city, linking the institution between its society and peripheries. Our patchwork of heterotopias, fragmented through modernization, economy and politicization.*
- III. **Curatorial practice:** *being liberated from the contemporary discourse within the institution, acting autonomously to present a new form of curatorial practice, one that governs the urban framework; presenting a rich fabric of cultural exchange and expression.*

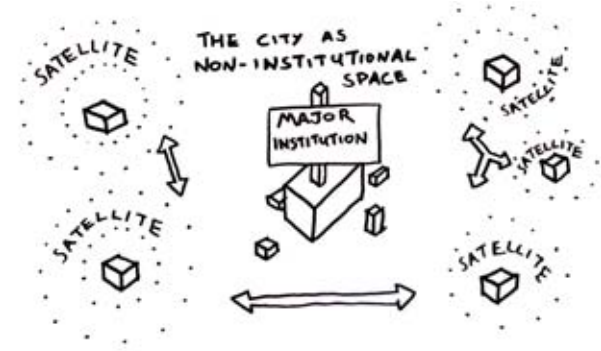


Fig 1: The city as non-institutionalized space

Chapter 1 The Demand For New Gallery Practices

Wander into any contemporary gallery at any point throughout the year, chances are something different in display, medium, atmosphere, interaction or aesthetic will be encountered. Historically, contemporary art has encountered numerous artistic movements, practices, and fashions of the time. As a result, contemporary art works and responds in a zeitgeist manner. Yet these movements are no doubt critical in any further development for contemporary art, where galleries often delegate celebratory exhibitions to the proponents of the time. However, with the change in movements or styles, a factor of accessibility and development that is nonetheless encouraging, has enabled the art world to flourish, enabling an economy of exploration and new formats of encounter. To re-quote *Esche*, the term 'art' might be starting to describe that space in society for experimentation, questioning and discovery¹, and to borrow *Joseph Beuys* as counterpoint exemplifying artistic expression, where anyone can be an artist², the contemporary art world is an arena for infinite possibilities and engagements.

The Changing Face Of Contemporary Art

As a focal point in contemporary arts history, we can see parallels between practice and technology. Photography, for example, completely alters the relationship between artists and the world, on the one hand,

and methods of representation as a whole, on the other³. This can be exacerbated and tracked throughout our history, linking technological advancement to newer and newer forms of representation, i.e. the video camera and film, the Internet and socially engineered projects. The artist and their practice can be uninhibited, freed from a singular methodology or output for encounter. Every technical innovation that has taken place since the Second World War has thus caused a wide range of reactions among artists, from the adoption of predominant production methods (the “mec-art” of the sixties), to the preservation, come what may, of the pictorial tradition (the “purist” formalism championed by Clement Greenberg)⁴. In contemporary arts this is continually witnessed, be it *Dora García's Instant Narrative (IN)* where the utilization of word-processing software on a laptop, coincides with a simultaneously projected display, whereupon real-time stories of viewers are created by an observer, resulting in the observer as protagonist; Or *Phil Collins' work* consisting of subjects performing for the camera, which are, in his own words, ‘largely about unevenly staging territory a of shared desire. I have never been motivated by the purely symbolic gesture, but rather by an idea’s actualisation’⁵. Or as another example of technological embrace, *rAndom International's Rain Room* installation at the *Barbican*⁶, which utilized cutting-edge digital technology that involved running water, digital soundscapes and 4d digital motion-sensor cameras. No longer the artists feels constrained by the gallery or the white cube of display, or perhaps as an objection to the white cube’s emblematic position of the estrangement of the artist from a society to which the gallery provides access⁷. In turn, curatorial strategy is no longer regulated by a set output i.e. the collection or selected works. Artistic output takes on an almost reflexive and anomalous approach, which rejects the rhetoric of previous tautology, culminating in the curator subject to working with newer movements and methods of display. This correlates a particular meeting-point in contemporary art between the artist, the work, the curator, and the institution.



Fig 2 & 3: *Dora García's* & *rAndom International's* new typologies.

As a matter of artistic evolution and development, the artist and the work move at a pace that will often envelop the good curator into the process; be it at conception, refinement or final display. However, the point to be raised, which shoehorns a massive issue into institutional display, is the notion within our culture of technological advancement. Here, the argument that the conventional institution, that governs the city’s contemporary artistic presentation, is secondary to the advancements of contemporary arts. The age-old debate of museum and gallery funding enabling the opportunity to house these technological advancements as exhibitionary practice remains a monetary problem for any institution; yet contemporary art no longer wants to be encountered primarily in the institution. The idea of encounter is no longer the visitor just merely admiring under the watchful eye of the invigilator; it transforms into other dimensions of cyberspace, social networking, literary and visual documentation, critical dialogues, interaction and participation. The art world is aware of the problems it faces, and new formations of programming respond to these factors. Yet this can be achieved. At *Künstlerhaus in Stuttgart* and *Künstlerhaus Bremen*, or the *Shedhalle in Zurich*, projects were combined with lectures and film programs, theatre productions and art exhibitions were presented parallel as complimentary practices, related to socially relevant themes, which attracted a young, politically motivated audience⁸.

However, what other motivations exist in the institution following these trends? The ‘work’ of art in the age of information, which has succeeded the age of production⁹, exists and is prevalent through a plethora of digital and virtual avenues. For instance, more and more institutions seek to create a digital persona, accessible through Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, Tumblr, Pinterest and their own Internet websites and YouTube channels; available to those with the technology in order to keep track and become acclimatised to their institutional changes or updates. Combined with these sites, bigger institutions outlay their catalogue for online browsing, enabling the viewer to encounter objects and quickly make links through other knowledge. Here the cultural institution can find its extension¹⁰. By which symbolically, requires us to rethink traditional modes of organizing our locations and identities in relation to the body, the public, the city, the institution, authority, power, disciplinary specialization, and many other conditions¹¹. The Guggenheim proclaimed at the beginning of the 21st Century, they

would be building the world's first virtual museum, accessible to all online, to be recognized in our culture as the world's "first important virtual building"¹². Fast-forward thirteen years, a simple Google search for *Guggenheim Virtual Museum* will either relocate you to the institutional home page, or documents containing the virtual museum's goal. In other words, the virtual utopia of the Guggenheim doesn't exist. Either the virtual museum is too far beyond our capabilities to access and understand, or the Guggenheim tried, and fell short. Perhaps due to administrative issues such as design, cost, cataloguing, fail-safe's, we don't know, yet maybe Guggenheim came to the realisation that maybe the virtual museum masked a fundamental anxiety: the anxiety that if they were willing to radically exploit the internet, this might precipitate the obsolescence of their museum itself – the disappearance of the museum into a million, or a billion, micro-museums¹².

Yet, the solitary goal of a virtual museum for ease of access from Abu Dhabi to Zanzibar, negates the overriding potential of new technologies to the contemporary art world. One can argue that since the Internet's formation as a central crux of people's livelihoods has acted as a catalyst for change and a shared interchange of ideas in a timely and accessible fashion. The participative quality of the world wide web and its avenues for exchange has fostered newer and newer modes to interact and opportunities to view places, information and objects without making the perhaps, costly or inaccessible journey to experience firsthand. One can witness a *Turner* seascape in Karnack, or a *Rothko* in Portsmouth city library, all through the click of a mouse. This factor is being replicated within the museum and gallery, and to an extent in the delivery of major art projects. Money and time is spent on accessible websites that offer the viewing of collections, shared institutional research and opportunities to learn more on historical aspects of the objects. Participation is an ideal that cannot be escaped and forces the programming of any cultural institution around the world. Be it personally and within the institution, off-site during an event, or as a virtual presence as part of an ongoing project.

Participation

Paradoxically, participation reveals itself as a motivation outside of the gallery and often adopts engagements outside of normal opening hours, rather than the assumption of generating footfall. These can be in the form of artists' talks, evening collaborations or off-site

events. However, the overriding aspect of contemporary participation can be utilised through the Internet. Interactions with galleries and institutions can be formed, developed and fostered through successful relationships. The internet acts as a timely and accessible method for those who feel uncomfortable inside contemporary arts venues, reducing boundaries and proclaiming transparency for eventual interaction. A twitter interaction between institution and spectator allows a fluid and unrestrictive opportunity to participate. For instance, this research has encountered an interaction with *Arnolfini, Bristol* – a stable institution within its urban framework. Their outreach using the 'hash-tag' #askacurator, proclaims the institution as "*Arts orgs are precious platforms for open & critical discourse in a world often defined by market values. This is our strength*"¹³. Open and critical discourse appears to be 'artspeak' for participation, where invitation is perhaps encouraged, yet may not be available¹⁴.



Fig 4: Participation in action; *One Flew Over the Void*, Javier Téllez

Does participation constitute an effort to engage with social media, online representations of exhibits and collections, artists' talks and tours and engagement within 'contemporary issues and arts'? Or are the major institutions responding to the globalization of our developing world, embracing technology, however damning it may be to day-to-day footfall? Perhaps this is the motivation; reducing boundaries and providing an appearance of a critical institution. Is a cyclical economy of visit – don't visit – website – slight engagements – visit taking place that exists within institution in our urban frameworks? New institutionalism attempts to corroborate avenues of people – exhibits – other elements of discourse – community – making, doing and refinement – meeting point, however complex the elements. Careful programming, perhaps perceived as unsystematic or grungy, lends itself to an aesthetic of engagement. Together these actors can learn, develop and engage. An attitude of positive

participation takes shape. This is often at ground level, allowing the neighbouring community to take hold and embrace this new avenue for collaboration. The front-loading action of community involvement and participation is furthered through interaction by doing; relevant programming, varied disciplines and industries.

The notion of participation, especially with local communities, is a coveted desire from governmental departments when setting out cultural allocations of budgets for development and contemporary arts management. This facet of policy planning is often a statutory requirement in terms of alleviating an urban framework's 'cultural wealth' and provision of arts. It also serves to fulfil the re-contextualization of the city in terms of cultural wealth and community engagement within and around the arts, again using the method of ground level and front-loading practices. Our urban frameworks are littered with examples of these attempts, yet the irony is that the re-contextualization of the city and its arts funding, is determined by budgetary purse strings that are reciprocated through evidential circumstances of community involvement and engagement.

The city of Bristol's local government recommend that the consequent frameworks that are developed; retail development, offices, leisure and entertainment uses, arts, culture and tourism uses will be primarily located within or, where appropriate, adjoining the centres in the identified network and hierarchy serving Bristol¹⁵. This factor, and the pressure associated with it in terms of arts funding allocation from local authorities, also forces the institution to alter its practice. No longer reliant on pure exhibitionary content, institutionalised methods seek variety, and this is exemplified by simple participatory practices. The simplicity of participation into institutions is not always straightforward; perhaps a repercussion of larger institutional boundaries, inaccessibility and the hanging noose of budget concerns. *Doherty* notes that,

‘...whilst art institutions attempt to adapt to incorporate peripatetic and participatory practices in their programmes, declaring certain exhibitions or projects to be ‘socially-engaged’, there may be little or no understanding of how to support the visitors’ negotiation of a social space within the gallery. There may also be a disparity between interaction and participation, the implications of which are long understood

in gallery education and live art programmes, but rarely understood in exhibition curating’¹⁶.

On the surface of things participation can seem as a beautiful concept that can only be a positive. However, scratch the surface of the positive and the problematic issues of participation become apparent. *Bishop* has observed this trend. She asserts that,

‘The hope is that newly emancipated subjects of participation will find themselves able to determine their own social and political reality. An aesthetic of participation therefore derives legitimacy from a (desired) casual relationship between the experience of a work of art and individual/collective agency’¹⁷.

Yet larger institutions are unable to translate this further into their own internal programming and enable a developmental approach to curatorial practices; an approach that entails production, participation, curation and exhibition.

‘The gesture of ceding some or all-authorial control is conventionally regarded as more egalitarian and democratic than the creation of a work by a single artist, while shared production is also seen to entail the aesthetic benefits of greater risk and unpredictability. Collaborative creativity is therefore understood both to emerge from, and to produce, a more positive and non-hierarchical social model’¹⁸.

Again, this can be summarised by *Doherty*, stating that by establishing a shift in the status-quo (i.e. curatorial and programming authority), and by creating a memorable and metaphorical act for the participants and certainly us, the secondary audience¹⁹, reduces the boundaries of museum and gallery participation. Witnessed through new institutionalism, participative programming, and henceforth, careful curatorial practice, the demand for the institution to interact differently with its audience becomes a vital factor. This is a defining quality for new institutionalism and perhaps a reason behind their success.

Blurred by the demand on institutions also creates an extra consideration on curatorship noted by *O'Neill* is that the idea of curatorship is now articulated as a constantly shifting and adaptive

discipline, using and adopting inherited codes and rules of behaviour²⁰. (Page 49) Yet, the prescriptive qualities that the curatorship of any larger institution and gallery will only impart and inform upon gallery practice, therefore removing the demand of visitor interaction, participation and subsequent footfall. New gallery practices witnessed in new institutionalism is not a new idea, and one that has been present before. Curatorial gesture in the 1990s began to establish curatorship as a potential nexus for discussion, critique and debate, in which the evacuated role of the critic in parallel cultural discourse was usurped by the neocritical space of curating²¹. This idea, condensed by *Esche*, of part workshop, laboratory and community centre²², reconstitutes the curator's role in its institution, and positions themselves within the centre. This affords the opportunity to respond to and engage within newer and newer practices of engagement, development and creation of contemporary arts.



Fig 5 & 6: *Resident spaces, Spike Island and Community involvement, Furtherfield.*

By way of concluding this chapter, it is worth noting that demands placed upon an institution are by no means hermetically sealed within the institution itself. Yet, institutions can make the decision to programme themselves differently and curate to an exclusive audience, thereby becoming an enigmatic arena, and shying themselves from the perceived 'status-quo'. However, the demands imposed upon institutional methods that are central to their operations and programming, expect responsiveness and change that is often inconvenient or inflexible. Take for example the city museum in any under-funded city; it cannot necessitate repairs and new methods of display technologies on a whim or respond in a timely fashion - and the same goes for the richest of institutions. Yet, the goal for audiences and the challenge for progressive curatorial practice is to foster and engage with new parameters in order to create fascinating institutional programming. By ceding some authority and encouraging participation,

community involvement contributes and is rewarded in a reciprocal relationship. The opportunity to create an environment of 'cultural trust' enable those involved to share knowledge, technologies, creativity and ideas together' allowing curatorial practice to underpin and build relationships. The idea of participation, somewhat implausible when dealing with a classical collection, enables contemporary art to be consistently engaged in a dialogue of various actants and becomes more and more vital to institutions and their programming.

A resultant quality is that of experiential and memory, which is so integral to contemporary arts goal. This is where new institutionalism and its curatorial practices come to the fore. Within our urban frameworks, newer and newer cells begin to interact and forge networks of integration with their audiences. Their flexibility, allowed through participation and mindful programming, engages the community and develops new arenas of workshop, interchanges, dialogues, exploration and community centres, while furthering the field of contemporary arts. By exploring further situations where new gallery practices, i.e. exhibitionary typologies, have ruptured the traditional, the opportunity to address new institutionalism's positives reveals itself.

Chapter 2 Challenging The Traditional – Exhibition Formats

Picture this. One day you decide to take in some culture, and to do this you investigate your local arts institution. Using the Internet to discover latest exhibitions and collections permanently on display, you travel to your desired destination. On the way, depending on your method of travel, be it on foot, by bike, car or train, you notice efforts to express creatively within your urban framework. Graffiti, public arts, statues, design, and architecture and planning constitute your everyday. You may even see a poster for the exhibit of which you are *en route* to. On arrival to your chosen institution, however large, or independent and small, you expect at least one exhibition of traditional gallery display and curatorial practice. Your expectation suggests a series of works hung at varying and specially selected arrangements, designed to create dialogues and evoke personal responses. You expect to carry a pamphlet briefing the displayed works, perhaps a short video installation somewhere within the gallery space, and maybe some literature that supports the exhibition, works, artist and associated interests. This either carries over to another exhibition in the same institution, or you move on to another (if available) to experience and encounter something else. All in all, a fine day's cultural encounter. However, this standard *assumption* no longer is restricted to all institutions. The new institutionalist arenas, and to an extent, some major institutions, share a coveted and perhaps needed desire to go beyond the gallery

walls. That is to escape the white cube, the traditionalist modality of standard museology and engage within new formats of exhibition. This chapter discusses examples of where new exhibition formats have shifted traditional curatorial practice, centralizing situations that are at the heart of the rise of new institutionalism. By highlighting this issue it is further hoped that the bridge between new institutionalism and its curatorial practice can be paralleled with the urban frameworks that support them.

Biennial – Biennial - Biennial

On exiting the idea of challenging traditional exhibition formats, it is worth beginning with the most common and exemplification of moving exhibitionary content from the gallery – the biennial. The most recognizably extreme of moving beyond the gallery and into the city as a celebration that collates art, performances and dialogues within its immediate context. Appropriating the urban frameworks' galleries with forgotten and unutilized spaces in order to display, perform and re-imagine, cities can be transformed into cultural hot-spots, homogenizing the city as a contemporary and forward-thinking cultural canon. For instance, the Venice Biennale is a mainstay of the contemporary arts calendar and the go-to event to witness emerging artistic and curatorial practice on a global scale. Yet, with the biennial comes an elitist stigma, somewhat a hangover from globalization and media hype. Biennialism has been discussed and addressed laboriously to this day as more and more biennials are born into fruition. For instance, Sao Paulo, Istanbul or Lyon, to name a few. Although there are factors that are complimentary to contemporary art, there is an oversight in delivery. Its intentions however can be noble, but we are concerned with an idea that is raised by *Bourriaud*, that art is made of the same material as the social exchanges, it has a special place in the collective production process¹. If a work of art is successful, it will invariably set its sights beyond its mere presence in space: it will be open to dialogue, discussion, and that form of inter-human negotiation². Curators and biennial organizers have recognized this, and seek to penetrate the urban context with exhibits that would be subject to a long-waiting list if it were not for the biennale. The biennial breaks down contemporary arts' biggest issue of authority and democratization of works. By creating an atmosphere that dedicates its existence to utilizing the city as a curatorial platform in order to engage

with, interact with and, as a consequence perhaps, improve upon. The simple act of reutilizing the city as a forefront and central critical axis of interchange allows the public to become engaged and reduces the self-deprecating character that the contemporary gallery imposes; it is a familiarity that is exuded, one that comforts the spectator. As *Bourriaud* observes again,

'What strikes us in the work of this generation of artists is, (...), the *democratic* concern that informs it. For art does not transcend everyday preoccupations, it confronts us with reality by way of the remarkable nature of any relationship to the world, through make-believe. Who do we want to kid into thinking that an *authoritarian art* in front of its viewers might refer to another real than that of an intolerant society, be it fantasized or accepted?'³

While *Bourriaud* raises the concern of artists creating a democratic society and rejecting authoritarian modes of contemporary art display, one can see the appeal of staging a biennale. Not only does it create the aforementioned atmosphere of cultural exchange and celebration, but also biennials remain imprinted in memory and exist in the realms of documentation, experience, memory and the virtual accompaniments that come with any large-scale citywide event. This is a desirable quality for a number of actants with our urban frameworks; the major institutions have an opportunity to put themselves in the shop-window and project themselves as "*precious platforms for open & critical discourse in a world often defined by market values*"⁴. Additionally, curatorial practice has a stage to collaborate and interact on a scale that includes a variety of cultures, nationalities and artists. This informs and expands their practices, fostering their own programming within their specific institutions. *Gunnar B. Kvaran*, director of *2013 Lyon Biennale*, even echoes these sentiments stating "With the biennale I was able to take more of a risk. It could be more of a test. I also thought that I could express more of myself in the biennale context than I can as a museum curator"⁵. Unlike a fixed institutional post, which plays a more pivotal role in the local context, curatorial vision with biennials can shape the ways in which we form an understanding of global culture. Here, biennials become devices through which art can interpret the world for its viewers⁶. As a final note, the local government can be seen in

the highly coveted voter appreciation category, while enabling their governed city to be seen as highly articulate and cultured place to be.

Exhibitionary Formats

On the whole, biennials have effected a realignment of the art world, allowing a view of the world that is more transcultural. Curators have established a wider interface between art and audiences, local and global, national and international. Inclusiveness has become one of their main motivations⁸. However, on a fundamental level, one can perceive the biennial as a series of exhibitions that include various typologies of display, practices, cultures and curatorial interventions. The exhibition becomes a powerful medium that can impose questions upon the spectator, but also itself. Exhibitions are part of the consciousness industry, complex tools of persuasion that aim to prescribe a set of values and social relations to their audiences⁹. The exhibition, as a specific cultural form, is the foremost intermediary through which ideas and knowledge around art are now produced and disseminated¹⁰. The exhibitionary power that the institutions hold, are the central speaking subjects in the standard stories about art which institutions and curators often tell to themselves and us¹¹. This factor is both the institutions niche, but also their shackle to progressive programming and challenging traditional exhibition formats.

The opportunity and more importantly, the presentation of different exhibition mediums and typologies has a positive on institutions. New institutionalism shines in this context. As a catalyst for challenging the traditional, expressing their inherent formations, as institutions comprised of varying actants and practitioners. O'Neill can summarize this, where,

'Exhibitions seek to appear as beautiful, natural, true, and legitimate, while absenting the ideological forces behind them. They are political tools for maintaining the status quo- modern ritual settings that reinforce identities, whether these be artistic, avant-garde, gender, racial, subcultural, regional, national, international, global, etc. Therefore, exhibitions always need to be understood as institutional utterances within a larger cultural industry.'¹²

However, the utterances from larger institutions depend on showpiece names or exhibits to gain suitable footfall. This, in turn, allows sponsors and a cleansing of rebellious or controversial themes present in the works to be reduced, paving the way for illegitimate and unresponsive curatorial practice; hindered by the hierarchy.

The attitude of new institutionalism's approach of catering toward exhibitions that may be considered 'too avant-garde' or 'difficult to programme', allows newer and progressive forms of exhibitionary content to be explored. *Joanna Mytkowska* renders this approach as an advantage, mainly created from and delivered by, the sense of collative community within new institutionalism. A collaborative curatorial practice takes place, and with this follows added benefits.

'My experience tells me that behind an institution you have to have the community who will support it. An advantage of a small, mostly private institution is that you don't have to apply in advance for funds and so can maintain flexible programming. Plus, there's a big interest, especially among younger academics and researchers because it offers a lot of possibilities to research, it's open for many directions.'¹³

With these qualities, new institutionalism allows any potential audience to interact and engage with artists who don't believe in the autonomy of art and the ones who use art as a tool for certain aims¹⁴.

There are numerous examples of 'collective' exhibitionary processes, from large to small. Yet, this chapter's focus is not to belittle or to pick holes in the Biennale process, in fact, it is a culturally conducive tool for any urban framework with positive traits to its inception, delivery and legacy. However, one of the first major collative exhibitionary formats that challenged the traditional and garnered much attention was the project entitled *Utopia Station*¹⁵, curated and directed by *Molly Nesbit*, *Hans-Ulrich Obrist* and *Rirkrit Tiravanija*. This was installed and began during the 2003 Venice Biennale. *Utopia Station*, focused on a collaborative exhibition framework rather than selected artists or works¹⁶. Self-described as "*Nothing more or nothing less than a way station, a place to stop, to look, to talk and refresh the route... as a whole [it] should be understood to be the composite of its many layers*"¹⁷. Emphasis was placed on the visitors' experience of the exhibition-as-event,

by presenting the exhibition as total installation and a singular site of evolutionary display¹⁸. Creating a sense of flexible, reactionary and improvised exhibitions allowed for the practitioners involved to collaborate from across different ends of the contemporary arts spectrum and ‘meet’ in a temporary and international station of exchange. The idea was borne out of Obrists’ notion of “*the exhibition expresses connective possibilities*”¹⁹. However, to its downfall, presented a Babelian territory of transition, fragmentation, and multiplicity in which the sheer number of artists and the lack of any clearly legible, autonomous artwork led to a confused sense of collectivism that over shadowed any potential singular narrative²⁰. *Utopia Station*, for its merits, propelled back into the world of contemporary arts the 1990’s development of cooperative, process-orientated, discussion-based view of exhibitions and manifested by a new generation of performative curators²¹; in this case, various artists and practitioners within the performative and non-centralized arena of the ‘station’.



Fig 7 & 8: *Utopia Station* exhibition, Venice Biennale, 2003.

By an appropriation of a centralized ‘arena’ or ‘node’ of interchange, *Utopia Station* afforded the opportunity to be unrestrained by conventional institutional boundaries, and to an extent, any reduced narrative allows for curatorial practice to be filtered down, allowing maximum discourse between works and participative functions. As a resultant, the focus shifts from narrative and curatorial authority in choices of works and constructed dialogues to a deterritorialization on productive qualities of contemporary art; discourses, participation, situation, seminars and collaborative properties. The 9th Annual *Istanbul Biennial* in 2005, extended the reach of such curatorial projects by going beyond the parameters of the exhibition as a single narrative and by mobilizing a field of public inquiry beyond the individual curatorial position, with discussions, lectures, publications, events, performances, and off-site projects being given added importance and attention²². Again, *Documenta 11* seen as a

successful deterritorialization of this discourse, with neither the time nor the place of the exhibition spaces in the city of *Kassel* operating as the territorial node for these discussions.²³ The dynamic of going beyond a notion of fixed institutional criteria, affords collaboration and distilled curatorial input constructs participation between artists and audience, unrestrained by the typical gallery institution, allowing freedom between involved parties.

The artist *Liam Gillick*, speaks of his own experience of being a ‘filter’ in this situation within the exhibition:

‘One of the main things that I did was to make the exhibition nondemocratic in terms of space, because there is usually an assumption, (...), that one should be somewhat democratic.’²⁴

Comparable with *Gillick’s* stance, is new institutionalism’s approach to new exhibitionary typologies that are carefully programmed through an intensive yet transparent and interactive curatorial practice. The *Malmö Konsthall* exhibited *Auto-Stop*²⁵ in June 2008, consisting of a collation of projects by twelve artists with a particular focus on participation, and most poignantly, the institution. *Jacob Fabricius* described it as follows:

‘*Auto-Stop* is a project that attempted to examine and test the institution, the institutional role and exhibition making. The project investigates how curators and institutions present artists’ works and ideas, and how exhibitions are prepared, created and presented. How can institutions meet and approach the audience today, or even meet and create a new audience?’²⁶

Auto-Stop worked as a conduit between the autonomous nature of the artists and their works, adapting the content in a collective and collaborative method between works and surrounding context. Therefore, an immediate participation is created and removed into and implemented within its immediate urban framework. The curatorial idea and dialogue between artworks was to address the notion of the accompaniment of instructions, which describes how and if they can be presented, used, performed, restaged or re-enacted²⁷. In *Auto-Stop* the artist appears as the composer,

who gives the performer, the staff of the *Malmö Konsthall*, the instructions for installing, handling, and in some cases performing/acting their work²⁸. The work will be seen, experienced, followed, discussed and interpreted differently²⁹. The idea of *Auto-Stop* and its hitchhiking connotations, combined with its relinquishing of curatorial authority to staff and other participants encompasses all the qualities of challenging traditional exhibition formats. The discourse isn't prescribed by authoritarian curatorial figure; instead it is filtered throughout the project fostering the attempt to look at how art is made and looked at, and how works, information and stories are distributed³⁰. This quality, allows participation into non-traditional formats to create dialogue between various actants; furthermore, the involvement of this through new institutionalism, allows ideas and methods of interactions to permeate into the local community and surrounding urban framework.



Fig 9: *Nowhereisland makes its final stop - Engagement & Participation.*

Auto-Stop speaks volumes of new exhibitionary formats and the subsequent qualities it has after the exhibition. Not only is the focus on participation, transfer of curatorial ownership and dialogue, but a question of arts production and transfer of allusive parameters the gallery imposes upon the exhibition. The resultant of this type of exhibitionary and curatorial content forms dimensional qualities that begin to exist within the audience, artist and participants. *Esche* has noted this in his own exhibition, *To Take a Picasso to Ramallah*, and is presented in four resultant dimensions; memory, documentation, virtual and subsequent presentation to a new audience of the previous event.

Off site strategic exhibitions such as *The Shape of Things to Come* and *Nowhereisland*, both delivered via *Situations* are other examples of multi-disciplinary events, similar in its programming to biennial models, yet with ground-level and participative motivations. McQuay comments that *The Shape of Things to Come*³¹ and its appeal is the resultant of incorporating everyone present into a total art work in which labour and leisure becomes a form of performance³². The opportunity to engage within an atmosphere that is unashamedly open to its audience and neglects authoritarian control, contributes to the exhibitions and works' success. Again, with *Nowhereisland*³³, a project described as a symbol of a displaced nation journeying south in search of its people, *Nowhereisland* existed in isolation but always within sight of its Embassy – a mobile museum carrying with it the stories of its origins³⁴, manages to alleviate the somewhat problematic issue of displacement, nationalism and citizenship, and create an atmosphere of participation, celebration and discovery. Again, this also incorporates ideals of memory [of the event], documentation [photos, social media, interactive qualities], virtual [online presence via youtube and message boards] and any subsequent presentation to new audiences via *Situations* [the producers, dialogues, articles and talks]. New institutionalism's pushing of the exhibition typology exists as an expression of their *raison d'être*; where curatorial initiatives seek to engender such interactions begin to unpack the terminologies we use to distinguish one project from each other³⁵. New institutionalisms' predilection to move beyond the four walls of institutional boundaries legitimizes their existence through the utilization of self-reflexive qualities that encourage ideas of participation, engagement of practitioners and synergy of divergent practices. As *Farquharson* observes,

'Production doesn't necessarily happen prior to and remote from presentation; it happens alongside or within it. Reception, similarly, refutes the white cube ideal of the individual viewers inaudible monologue, and is instead dialogic and participatory.'³⁶

As a result of these intentions, new institutionalism becomes a vehicle for hybrid contemporary arts production, programming, development and engagement. Also, as a further consequence, curatorial practice re-aligns itself from the major institutional positioning as a figurehead in control of exhibitionary content and

associated educational elements. Sole authorship is relinquished (to a point), favouring a collective approach, where stability and curatorial freshness and dynamic in continually in a cyclical state of flux, contributing to new institutionalisms image of new, emerging and ground-level contemporary arts thinking. *Hirsch* supports this curatorial transgression as a framework the new European Kunsthalle can subscribe to, becoming an opportunity to collaborate within its surrounding urban framework, negating the reliance on centralized institutions. He suggests that:

‘...such realities could imply that permanent negotiation between stability and instability is not understood as a problem or deviation from an ideal condition, but instead as a chance to develop a new typology: a growing kunsthalle that takes the changed artistic, social, and economic conditions at face value, using them as a point of departure for its spatial-architectural strategy.’³⁷

Incidentally, money and funding is an issue that contributes to this method of collaborative engagement, whereas the major institutions favour the allowance of off-site exhibitions and different participative exhibitionary practices in alignment with a biennial or festival.

In order to conclude upon exhibition typologies and challenging the traditional, the beginning of this chapter described a normal day to day visitor to the regular format of gallery hung works. However, as we are aware the motivation to go beyond the gallery walls by institutions is great; yet, the opportunity to do so is readily available to some as opposed to others. New institutionalisms foundation as an organization is rooted within its people; they are the ones who create, interact, collaborate, spread the word and those who are the audience. Through participatory exhibits such as *Nowhereisland* or *Auto Stop*, any curatorial practice is re-evaluated and discovered through audience interaction; forming new and undiscovered aspects of the work in a timely and participative process. Again, different legacies exist after these new exhibitionary methods, translated via participation and exist much longer in conscience of the new institution and the audience. Compare this with the endless ‘merry-go-round’ of the biennial circuit; an ever cyclical economy of contemporary arts exchange. Not without its

merits, such as regenerative qualities, re-use of interstitial spaces or putting contemporary into the stream of consciousness of its urban context, the biennial is an annual ‘go-to’ where an over politicized, capitalist and economy of exchange reigns supreme; diluting any curatorial and artistic experimentation. Now without divulging into the *ifs* and *buts* of biennial operations, successes and failures, the point is that new institutionalisms’ favor for off-site engagements, in conjunction *with*, traditional gallery based functions and exhibitionary programmes, results in a curatorial programme that exemplifies and constitutes a progressive method of contemporary arts practice and divergent mission statement. Perhaps created by funding and availability of actants, it is no less a positive move for contemporary arts. New institutionalism manages to bridge the gap between audience and urban framework, while still incorporating curatorial strategies of interaction, engagement and divergent artforms. Although the format isn’t 100% foolproof as the age old problem of catering to everyone exists, the affording of the *opportunity* for audiences to become involved at ground-level, while becoming engaged with new and contemporary arts.

Chapter 3 The Modern Gallery Versus The New Institutionalism

The contemporary art institution, centralized within its urban framework, is generally the focus for the people. It is the arena where those engage with, learn about and witness contemporary art. Yet its position as the home of citywide culture remains under threat in the wake of the rise of new institutionalism. Held as an assumptive symbol of elitism and a victim of recession distrust, new institutionalism begins to cater to those disillusioned with the larger institution; on a transparent level and an engagement level. As chapter two explored, the rise of non-gallery exhibition typologies and their feasibility is something the institution cannot readily engage and respond in a timely matter. Yet, there are those institutions, perhaps with a more creative curatorial practice, that lends itself to engaging with new institutionalism, collaborating as a parallel somewhat more resonant in the public eye. This presents an important crossroads for those programming the larger institutions; stick with the tried and tested, reliant on loans, collections, touring exhibitions and funded cyclically, or twist and engage beyond its four walls becoming diversified and subject to ridicule and failed endeavours. Neither is the wrong approach, where curatorial practice can be flexible depending on context. Those who twist, and the focus of this chapter, only raise the integrity and programming of any larger institution, contributing again, and more importantly, recognizing new institutionalisms' rise

and working in parallel. By way of representing both sides fairly, this chapter explores the necessity of the major institution and gallery. Investigating the positive qualities that the larger institutions have on the urban framework and the steps institutions make towards better programming and curatorial practice, this chapter will present initiatives that are contributing towards better institutions and an overall more diverse and culturally positive urban environment.

The Empire Strikes Back!

Before discussing those examples of institutional initiative, *Doherty* raises an issue that must be at the heart of any spearheaded proposals.

‘Consequently, do the art institutions of the future risk becoming more alienating, less potentially contemplative or active spaces for the visual imagination? If the exhibitions and projects which have emerged through this discourse mimic the experience economy of the ‘real’ world, does this lead to yet more coded patterns of behaviour for visitors rather than potentially surprising or liberating points of engagement?’¹

The larger institutions stand at a precipice between cultural forward-thinking and ‘eye-rolling’ engagement. Institutions are susceptible of spending money and dedicating time to those engagements that lack the most important quality of community and soul. Unfortunately, the notion of museology and elitist cultural engagements can sometimes feel as if it is forced upon its audience. It hasn’t organically grown out of development, engagement or participation; rather it has been implanted and praised as a solution. Institutional enterprise comes with a nasty stigma, and that is politics. The moment the institution, culturally coded as a public arena for contemporary arts, steps beyond its designated threshold, the metaphorical knives are out. Politicization of space, gender, race, creed, art-works themselves, interactions, participation and, perhaps most poignantly, class systems all work in opposition to any initiatives of valor the contemporary institution and their curatorial practice. It is perhaps the downfall of such strategies as the institution is constantly working while looking over their shoulder in terms of funding and council approval. Nonetheless,

initiatives that seek to engender its surrounding city and celebrate its cultural vitality is a positive characteristic. Yet, this ideal for our contemporary arts institutions brings with it an institutional strain, where the curator of the context is borne.

Already responsible for his or her own institution, the curator of context has to resonate with place. Harnessing place for curatorial engagements in order to supplement the identity of a citywide framework is by no means easy and subject to various strands of politicization. This is perhaps the proclivity for festival and biennial engagement; democratic curatorial modes of practice are preferred. Charged with the same duty of care that characterizes the custodian’s role within the museum, the curator of the context-specific exhibitions² manner of representation doesn’t democratically represent the various urban communities, instead the centralized location is preferred, where simple curatorial initiatives take place in pockets throughout the year. The curatorial practice of larger institutions cannot be responsible to become autonomous within the city, not through skills, but as a duty to the wider urban framework. The institution at the centralized locus of the urban framework cannot feasibly engage with all extremities of its urban environment. Characterization serves only to bring forth archetypes of a society that seemingly exists purely for the purpose of promoting individuality, but actually suppresses it when it is considered a hindrance to social rules⁴.

Collaborative Exhibitionary Formats

Nowadays most museums work hard to foster visitors’ personal identification with their institutions and programmes, and to secure their loyalty, not for purely pedagogical reasons but with a view, above all, to obtaining financial resources⁵. That is perhaps the tension between curatorial aspirations of mass appeal and budgetary concerns in implementing initiatives; a mirror that diametrically opposes artists’ wishes to experiment and create⁶. We begin to see a picture form that institutional curatorial strategies hinge upon a number of factors; cultural and urban identity, funding, accessibility, supporting staff/administration and most strikingly, visitor critique and participation. In arenas where social patterns of behaviour and cultural codifications are imposed upon the visiting public, it is the public that defines successful strategies to move beyond its

rhetoric of civic arts epicenter. Yet, as *Breitwieser* notes, almost all art museums are keen to ensure they do not miss the boat, and have introduced contemporary art that includes time-based forms such as cinema, performance and dance in both their exhibition programmes and collections⁷. Most notably today, *Tate Modern's* utilization and housing of such ticketed activities in former gas storage facilities named "*The Tanks*"⁸.

Whilst the corporatization of larger art institutions continues to mitigate against self-reflexivity and experiment, that such projects may continue to remain the exception rather than the norm⁹, there are examples that strive to initiate strategies that are not exclusive to their own gallery business headways. In 2010, *MoMa* began to consider how originally emancipatory formats could be framed within a canonical institutional context¹⁰. The resultant was *MoMa Media Lounge*. This example, not moving beyond its conventional built form, but into independent virtual navigational 'hubs', contributed towards a questioning of display strategies one would encounter in the museum. The media lounge afforded the opportunity for audiences to experience and self-dictate their navigation through *MoMa's* archives. Allowing the institution to dilute the 'higher' degree of authority over the selection of the exhibits¹¹, an emancipatory experience of the institution and its collection is afforded to the viewing public. An initiative such as this allows larger institutions such as *MoMa* to assess projects' pedagogic legacies, but more importantly, visitor engagement. Visitor's behaviour is already coded by the gallery's associate exhibition or biennale programmes which demand a much more passive series of encounters¹².



Fig 10: *MoMa's Media Lounge in action; audience engagement.*

Additionally, and initiated at the time of writing, is *Tate's Art Maps and the Museum as Platform* project. An offshoot of *Tate's* digital strategy for 2013-15, where

'the Art Maps project and its research questions has coincided with a wider transition at Tate from audience interaction being a marginal activity to one that is informing much of our thinking about the future of the organization'.¹³

Through real and digital experiences, visitors in workshops are able to highlight and interact personal and/or historical impulses about art works they have encountered in a geographical manner. So far, *Tate* has investigated the degree that experiences should be scripted or "scaffolded" experiences¹⁴. Implementing third-party media such as *Twitter* or *Flickr*, and hinging experience on social media interactions, something which is pivotal to audiences daily transgression, the overall output is yet to be dictated. However, we can immediately learn *Tate's* motivations; not just to inform their digital strategy but also reminiscent of *Moma's Media Lounge*. Allowing visitors to communicate their desire for free-formatted experiences or scripted narratives, facilitates an intuitive and informed curatorial strategy. The downside to this is that overall it is a strategy, it doesn't contribute towards arts production and negates the workshop and community engagement factor. *Tate* does recognize however, the important role technology will play on engagement and individual narratives when it comes to encountering culture.

Another example, and much closer to a new institutionalist approach to exhibition making within a community has been *Ikon Gallery's Slow Boat Project*¹⁵. Now in its third year, a leased narrow boat travels the waterways and canals of the UK in the hope of engaging young artists with internationally acclaimed practitioners of contemporary arts. Instigated and owned through *Ikon's* youth programme, those aged between 15 and 19 are invited to participate in this unique floating venue for exhibitions, installations, discourse and other art events. Through its annual iterations beginning in 2011, the *Slow Boat* has utilized its unusual format to exhibit video installations, conventional artworks, workshops and more significantly, an offshoot to *Sarah Browne's* own *Ikon* exhibition, *How To Use Fools Gold* in which she collaborated with members of the youth programme.

Coincidentally, the *Slow Boat* is a collaborative venture with the new institutionalist programmed *Chisenhale Gallery*, mainly due to the fact it stopped near the gallery during the second week of London's 2012 Olympic Games. *Slow Boat's* initiative, combining community, reuse of fragmented waterways, mixture of formats, unique venue, collaboration and systematic usage of internet, social media and technologies, is all focused on a narrow approach to those aged 15-19. Not that this wrong, although it highlights institutional problem of mass appeal, and this only exacerbated when the hermetically sealed white cube is left behind where creating possibility is not a fixed point of view but a slippery and changeable condition made up of spatial, temporal and relational elements. In other words, for possibility to emerge there needs to be a site, a moment and a group of people¹⁶.



Fig 11: *Ikon's Slow Boat makes a scheduled stop.*

Indeed, such initiatives as *Slow Boat* seek to engender subjective symbolism of the gallery within its urban framework as an active and aware organization that recognizes the micro communities that make up the city. This seeks to be a positive in an environment where branded institutions market themselves as global businesses, elitist in the wake of such a bad economic situation. Yet, such symbolism brings the emergence of nomadic institutional and curatorial assumptions. The desire to implement and interact at every opportunity brings with it elements of lacking critical discourse and curatorial programming. If *Tate*, *Guggenheim* or *Arnolfini* interacted with every burgeoning project, any institutional identity is weakened and seen as without comprehensive strategy.

It's Not All That Bad...

Nevertheless, the larger institutions can carry themselves with a certain amount of pride. Centered as cultural civic attractions, they cater within specific parameters. Indeed, their administrative and funding allocations are publicized and dictate their survival as institutions. As a rather worrying trait that exemplifies the state today and the hanging noose over larger institutions, is the *Museum Associations' annual Cuts Survey*¹⁷. 2013's report of 124 museum respondents found 49% experienced a cut to their overall income with 37% of staff being cut¹⁸. One respondent stated that "we are doing what we can to augment our income, of course, but the level of cuts in public funding will never be compensated for through income generation"¹⁹. Larger institutions face an uphill battle to even consider curatorial strategies that deviate from the norm. This perhaps one of the reasons behind initiatives that supplement future curatorial and museological decisions but could also serve as a solution to engage further with new institutionalist establishments. We may need to develop strategies that explode the museum into another space so that the insulated institution splinters into a plethora of situations and contexts, touching a broader, more diverse range of constituencies and challenging disciplines²⁰. However, the institution remains a notion to be celebrated, indeed this research has already mentioned their purpose serves new institutionalisms' rise, but also, the centralized institution of note offers the public, the inactive spectator within contemporary arts, an opportunity to encounter. This in turn, may have a domino effect, where further investigation into arts involvement begins. A victim of media trends and contemporary tastes, the larger institutions size negates any timely response to emerging trends and community developments. It could also be argued that the current economic climate turns people's heads towards a focus of art production witnessed in the new institutionalist cells of activity rather than the finished article one may encounter in the larger institution.

With our urban frameworks littered with the centralized institution or institutions of note, supplemented by smaller new institutionalist enterprises that thrive from their immediate communities and actants, one approach witnessed in Europe is *L'Internationale* network. Made of six organisations, and working on a wider scale across international boundaries, it comprises of *Moderna galerija*

(MG+MSUM) Ljubljana, *Museu Nacional Centro de Arte Sofia Reina (MNCARS)* Sofia, *Museum for Contemporary Art of Barcelona (MACBA)* Barcelona, *Museum van Hedendaagse Kunst Antwerpen (M HKA)* Antwerp, *Garanti Kültür A.Ş. (SALT)* Istanbul and the *Van Abbemuseum in Eindhoven (VAM)*. Operating as a discursive network across the continent, *L'Internationale* serves to share dialogues, methods of working, interdisciplinary research and visitor access. Its *raison d'être* is as follows:

‘Contrary to the global hegemonic ambitions of the major contemporary art institutions, *L'Internationale* proposes a long-term collaboration among museums and archives—each of them with its specific collection focus and history—that intends to give greater visibility to their similarities and differences. *L'Internationale* proposes a space for art within a non-hierarchical and decentralised internationalism, based on the value of difference and horizontal exchange among a constellation of cultural agents, locally rooted and globally connected.’²¹

L'Internationale epitomizes the potential that institutions can share and exchange across boundaries of political, social, monetary and gentrification. Not concerned with simple sharing exhibits, the museums in the consortium are all dedicated to modern and contemporary art and all share the conviction that museums should collect and display art in relation to society and not as an isolated, autonomous entity²². The network approach witnessed in this initiative serves as an example of institutions can go beyond their traditional lending habits. However, this sort of initiative is in danger of sliding into biennialistic habits and can immediately become elitist institutions behaving in their own interests. *L'Internationale* could easily be scaled down and replicated within our urban frameworks. Imagine citywide networks of the centralized institutions coordinating continually with new institutionalist cells from around the cities and various communities. The issue here, is again, funding and the giving of any funding determined by community ‘worth’. Nevertheless, an urban framework network that works and collates programmes can improve an overall cultural competency for its audience? Interdisciplinary relationships could be formed with new and emerging practitioners having an opportunity to interact in a transparent, accessible and engaging

variety of formats. Off-site opportunities and curatorial practices could flourish under such strategy.



Fig 12: *Slow Boat's* facility to operate variously.

In discovering the initiatives larger institutions make in wake of a new institutionalized urban framework, and as a defense of the larger organisations, there is a focus on re-aligning their own programming and strategies. Curatorial practice has implemented different formats of exhibiting and participation in a juxtaposed format. While beginnings of *Tate's Art Maps...* project look to marry its formations and begin to engage with the institution as a catalyst, *Ikon's Slow Boat* off-site and participatory factors is a proven example of implementation of curatorial strategies. However, the larger institution becomes stretched in the wake of new institutionalism. The overarching problem for contemporary arts is funding. Any engagement within our urban frameworks involves serious strategies and long drawn out planning in order to see fruition. Yet, this could be alleviated. The larger institution has the opportunity to become a centralized figure both within the city, but within a larger network of institutions. New institutionalism works in an autonomous manner, which could only serve to supplement and interact with initiatives from the larger institutions. If *L'Internationale's* structure was replicated on an urban scale, facets of communities who are misrepresented or perceived as marginalized could be engaged and have opportunities to collaborate with either the centralized institution or a newly installed satellite new institution. The urban framework can utilize a network of satellite institutions, becoming an organized framework in order to collaborate, engage and supplement a varied curatorial strategy for its environment and audience. Nevertheless, the central institution of note has a role to play in our society; something that will never be reduced.

Chapter 4 Curating The City As Non-Institutionalized Space

Ever since the 1960's, the conception of the 'institution of art' begins to emerge that includes not just the museum, nor even only the sites of production, distribution, and reception of art, but the entire field of art as a social universe¹. The urban frameworks we live in, the places we visit, and the media we consume is laden with artistic endeavour and progression. Yet nowadays, in our globalized world we are more and more accustomed and accommodating to contemporary arts, and how the art that we see in museums and in galleries around the world, in biennials, how it ends up there, if enough of the right people think it's good and that's all there is to it². Audiences are aware to the roles of actants within contemporary art; artist, dealer, buyers, critics and curators. The art world, now a global multibillion-dollar industry, is not part of the 'real world' is one of the most absurd fictions of art discourse³. Contemporary art exists on a variety of levels and scales; within our cities the most established are exhibited in the larger institution, while emerging arts and its production originates from new institutionalism. Our urban framework is littered with new institutionalist institutions and seeks to have a wider effect on contemporary arts, and has a consequent legacy within our communities. Building on previous chapters, and by way of concluding this research, this section will collate and expand upon curating the city as non-institutionalized space, addressing the initial notions of new institutionalism, urban

frameworks, and curatorial practice. The New Institutionalized City has been realized, or has it?

The Urban Framework in Flux

At the start of this research, new institutionalism was held as a living and fully formed personification of a utopian ideal; the institution grounded in its community with involved actants throughout, developing, interrogating, self-representing, self-supporting, collaborative, expressionist and exhibiting. The wave of new institutionalism upon our urban frameworks has refreshed our contemporary arts make-up, with an ever-increasing availability and transparency to new and emerging practitioners. Its utopian ideals rebel against the constitutional hegemony of the commercial and larger institutions that dominate our cultural and urban environments. But for all its perceived negative hegemony, the larger institution, the contemporary arts civic 'given' within the urban landscape, or the implanted showpiece architectural marker, acts as a cultural 'buoyancy device'; to the public, to new institutionalism and to our urban environments. This unsettling factor (to contemporary arts practitioners perhaps), alluded to by *Doherty*⁴, where the aesthetics of this supposed 'wrong place' is close to the playful, psycho-geographical nature of the *Situationist dérive*, lends itself towards *Foucault's* notion of heterotopia⁵, and the juxtaposing of real spaces littered with incompatible new institutionalist approaches. Urban frameworks are sensitive structures that over time have responded to external change and reconfiguration; a victim of historical, political, and economic decisions. As the frameworks have expanded cities have suffered boundaries, zonal issues, territorial disputes and uproar, and never more so today, where fiscal advantages can dictate communities that constitute the urban grain. In the early part of the 20th Century, to modernist architects such as *Le Corbusier*⁶ took on the role of town planners and urbanists, developing vast plans and regulations for the ideal city to live in, where areas of the city were zoned for certain processes; industrial, commercial, leisure and living. Indeed, this carries on today with government allotting out-of-town commercial areas, or areas dedicated to shopping or culture. The issue that rears its head, on a contemporary arts level, and to a more worrying extent, urban framework level, is the notion that our cities are becoming more and more fragmented. Accelerated by economic divides and globalization's penchant

for virtual interconnectivity rather than face-to-face neighbourly communities, new institutionalism runs the risk of encouraging a fragmented contemporary arts landscape. Contemporary art is now being explored and developed increasingly towards immateriality, interactivity, instability, uncertainty and spatial temporalization. This process, inevitably affecting the global communication network, produces fragmentation, interrupting critical moments in the flow of communication and the production of value⁷.

And in the End...

Satellite institutions, autonomous in their approaches, are, as we have already discussed, immensely beneficial for the immediate community and our urban environments. Yet they are inclined to remain a satellite operation; not through stubbornness, but through their degree of locality and autonomy. Locality is always a product of the confrontation and negotiation of the locale (or the neighbourhood) with the global, where this vital and intense process of self-reflection, autocritique and self-innovation allows the individual institution to continue to survive and obtain meaning within global modernization⁸. New institutionalism initiatives are self-preserving and representing, where a strong identity is formed and nurtured by those involved throughout the organization. They can choose to inject themselves within the stream of consciousness of the contemporary arts world, becoming a stop on the arts trail, or dedicate themselves to implementing strategies and programmes that expand their curatorial practice, becoming pinnacles of progression, community and exhibiting. As a result, new institutionalism has its own element of territorialization. It is protective of what it encapsulates and shies from institutional parameters that may be implemented on a larger institution. Their construction of community + laboratory + exhibition is precious, and outside involvement from traditional arts frameworks are perceived as a 'foreign' intrusion.

Contemporary institutions of note, and, to an extent, governmental initiatives, are strategic endeavours to reintegrate themselves into the broader urban territory by commissioning artists to do context-specific works⁹. These issues and somewhat hurried strategies emphasize curatorial harnessing of economic and cultural drivers of regeneration and tourism and which posits the cultural event

as an ideal cipher for the meeting of international and local, the promotion of place as the subject and site for an art event runs the risk of subjugating art to the specifics of location¹⁰. One could suggest the centralized institutional ‘pull’ negates experimentation and accessibility for the audience, which lends itself to a deterritorialization of our urban framework. Hence, any cultural lack and development is reprogrammed and developed through new institutional ‘cells’ within our urban framework’s interstitial spaces and delivered via new institutionalism.

We tend to think about the contemporary urban environment in contradictory terms: as both an abstract space modeled upon hierarchical orderings, and as a space of ruptures and disjunctions¹¹, yet new institutionalism works in favour of spectators and practitioners. Any freneticism of our urban framework’s cultural development is not a given, where locality and territorialization, or perceived *deterritorialization*, is alleviated when addressing the wider scale. Cities can potentially become the most vital spaces for the production of localities¹² and contribute towards the new institutionalist model of the artistic laboratory, but on an urban scale. Locality provides us, as curators and artists directly involved with such events, a unique opportunity to explore the creative and innovative possibilities¹³. The urban framework becomes the laboratory, where satellite new institutionalist organisations become the test stations, or experiments into new approaches for curatorial practices. Not to devalue and trivialize new institutionalism, the number of satellite ‘cells’ contributes to a larger mimicking on an urban scale, contributing to a varied and progressive contemporary arts framework. Susceptible to success or failure, the smaller cells and the larger institutions, vie for audience engagement, appealing to its different communities, but offering the opportunity for audiences to engage and observe upon, and within, alternative and unfamiliar curatorial agendas. This model for urban frameworks is supported in the research of *Buck-Morss et al.*

‘In the laboratory model, not the object but the process is important. The role of the public shifts from audience to co-investigator. Institutions, no longer display cases, become co-laboratories. Rather than merely entering urban space, the works of artists reconfigure it. If cities are laboratories, if artists are practitioners, if the public

energizes new cultural meanings, then how will these imaginings give visibility to the urban landscape? How will knowledge of the city be transformed?’¹⁴

New institutionalist cells transgress between themselves through audience interaction, virtual networks of exchange and off-site engagements. However, it is a time-based transference into the urban framework, where parallels again exist with new institutionalist formations, and the emergence of communities and territories. The growing art institution emerges from the sequential putting together of individual segments, breaking the assumption that an art institution’s plan forms a coherent entity that is designed by a single author¹⁵. Instead it divides the space into autonomous yet related components¹⁶. This resonates with the involved actants throughout; yet, it also proves an interesting counterpoint beyond its community and is representative of the constituents that make up the larger urban scale. By introspectively replicating the urban dissonance between audience, politics, economy, territory, art practices and curatorial strategies, new institutionalist forms of organization contribute towards a bridging between communities, and as a consequence, subjectively converges the supposed deterritorialized urban framework. Unlike larger contemporary arts venues, new institutionalism’s accessibility and transparency allows for varied communities to collate and contribute to the institution’s programming, where curatorial practice caters for new responses and engagements. This renegotiation of authorship and its traditional role models¹⁷ permits traditional cultural infrastructures to transfer between spectators and practitioners, both on a virtual level, but also on an integral ground level of its urban environment. As globalization removes the need to actively participate, new institutionalism and its non-authoritative curatorial practice, benefits the cultural engagement within contemporary arts. Audiences become familiarized with new institutionalist contemporary arts institutions, engrained in the urban fabric, resisting the conventional implanting of context-specific and public arts incentives.



Fig 13: *Chisenhale Gallery unapologetic exterior.*



Fig 14: *Bristol Diving School's re-use of a dockyard building.*



Fig 15: *Furtherfield's reuse of a community centre, positioned within Finsbury Park.*

New institutionalism also promotes an approach with urban frameworks of reutilization; borrowing architecture and regenerating derelict spaces as a vehicle to operate from. Contemporary art has always had a penchant for utilization of different architectural typologies; perceived as dialogical constructing devices that resonate with works, to the opposite role of abstract exhibitionary spaces for display. As new institutionalism operates autonomously, and without the financial backing of its larger contemporaries, its susceptibility to instability works in its favour. Spatially unstable institutions aim for a fusion with their urban everyday surroundings, becoming defined by flexible, dynamic borders that temporarily adopt existing territories and spatial vacancies in the city¹⁸. Synergy between spaces of production and art fundamentally expands the urban environments cultural wealth, offering smaller situations and spaces for practitioners to respond, produce, and exhibit. This is a symbolic and, to an extent, material reproduction of the city space for specialized cultural activities¹⁹. It also extends into the psyche of our urban frameworks; where gentrification by entrepreneurs and rebuilding of communities prevail, the reuse of existing architecture represents an urban familiarity and concern. Engraining themselves into the urban fabric of the city, a sustainable housing of new institutionalism takes place. For example, *Spike Island*, the former tea-packing warehouse, is now a system of artists' spaces, business units, contemporary galleries, café, learning spaces and administrative facilities. Although the former usage of its architectural components offers a larger footprint to offer varied outputs, other new institutionalism works on a smaller scale also. *Chisenhale Gallery* occupies a former veneer factory on a much smaller tenement layout of central London, while *Furtherfield Gallery* occupies a pavilion within *Finsbury Park*. *Furtherfield* also recognizes that its physical presence isn't sufficient in order to disseminate its ideas; it also utilizes the adjacent park, a common room, but integrally, a virtual presence through the internet. Consequently, one could posit that new institutionalism's re-use of architectural typologies of former producers, businesses and civic spaces requires us to rethink traditional modes of organizing and identities in relation to the body, the public, the city, the institution, authority, power, disciplinary specialization, and many other conditions²⁰. Audiences have become accustomed to architectural typologies of museums and galleries, and while contemporary art practitioners maybe more familiar with grungy and reused spaces, the notion of familiar

spaces becoming rejuvenated and sustainable appeals significantly to its communities. It also has its benefits financially for new institutions, but also disseminates into our urban frameworks. The city has a wealth of defunct spaces and architecture in desperate need of reuse. Through new institutional initiatives buildings can have a second, third or fourth opportunity rather than a fragmented, disseminated and erased series of interstitial spaces. One could also argue that new institutionalism's questioning of whether or not a fundamental change in established structures is possible within a power system that has evolved over time²¹ becomes evident with its focus primarily on social and community regeneration. Combine this with its participatory imperative, new institutionalism makes a strong claim to emerge from the shadow of larger institutions. New institutionalism also acts as new and emerging agencies for political and social meeting, where the physical structure of the building is many things in one: a hybrid of school, community centre, archive, and gallery. They become an evolving institution, both programmatically and physically²².

Additionally, the larger institution, and particularly true within today's society we witness a series of regenerative and construction impetus with the contemporary arts world. New wings of museums are being renovated, expanding, reconfigured and designed to be built. The institution has been able to reinvent itself in the wake of globalization by utilizing architecture to exemplify their initiatives. With globalization, established economies, social relationships and politics, as well as collective and individual imaginations, visions, values and languages, are all affected, contaminated and transformed²³. In recent decades, large-scale museums have increasingly veered towards acting like global businesses, in which branding is articulated through characteristic architectural styles. Thus, visiting the institution has become a spatial experience: the building is an attraction in its own right²⁴. Notably examples are the *Guggenheim Bilbao*, *Centre Pompidou* or *Tate Modern*, but also we witness examples of regeneration of sites on a smaller scale, particularly in new institutionalism. For instance, *Spike Island's* re-use of a former tea-packing factory, *Arnolfini's* renovation of a tea warehouse or the *Baltic* as a former flour mill. Recent institutional regeneration has favoured architecture whose hallmark vernacular includes piazzas and agora-style gathering places²⁵. No longer does the institution marginalize itself as a civic attraction, it implants itself at the centre

of urban frameworks; people utilize museums as markers within the city. As cultural epicenters for our cities, institutions are able to capitalize on this factor, positioning themselves right at the forefront of audiences cultural and physical geographical encounter.

The effect on the structure of any cities urban framework can either become fragmented or fused by new institutionalism. The fine line between deterritorialization or heterotopian cities often become subject to audience participation and willingness to accept a variety of contemporary art formats and exhibitions. Artists' motivations to become involved and collaborate also stem new institutionalisms' success, however, it is to be believed that new institutionalism works due to its current revival. However, what is the impact on curatorial practice? So far this research has spoken of participation, collaboration and relinquishing curatorial authority, but if all these factors take precedent over curatorial practice, does this lead to a further parallel of the cities' fragmentation, and as a consequence, a contemporary art environment made up of nomadic curatorship? The notion of curatorship within our cultural make-up is pertinent. Curatorial practice is a durational, transformative, indeterminate, and speculative activity, a way of keeping things in flow, mobile, in between, indeterminate, crossing over and between people, identities, and things, encouraging certain ideas to come to the fore in an emergent communicative process, which permits more freedom than any conception of organization²⁶. In theory these characteristics lends itself to a progressive and engaging format and strategy for curators, and falls into the category of nomadic and freelance curatorship. However, the role of the larger institution affords the curator a stable platform in order to integrate strategies and initiatives that create a varied programme of events. For some institutions this is easier than others; yet, the stability of the institution presents a consistent stream of exhibits and events, which should, in theory, expand cultural and contemporary arts horizons. The larger institution can attract bigger names within contemporary arts, thereby maintaining conservation and preservation of works and projects. As a consequence, the larger institution represents a pinnacle for contemporary arts, and not to be overly critical on new and emerging arts and disregarding any attempt to foster their institutional presence, and offers a platform for the widest possible audience to encounter works of note and meaning. It also makes a subjective message to the contemporary

arts world that the institution is supportive of varying art forms and international artists. As *Obrist* states, “the exhibition expresses connective possibilities”, and this never more represented within the larger institutions at the centre of our urban frameworks. It is the foremost intermediary through which ideas and knowledge around art are now produced and disseminated²⁷.

Nomadic Cultural Agents

Within the context of an increasingly ubiquitous biennale culture, a generation of nomadic curators and artists emerge through whom new experimental models of presentation are circulated and exchanged²⁸. A hangover from Biennale proliferation, curatorship has been burdened by the need to respond internationally and beyond institutional or urban platforms. The prevailing ghost of globalism further warrants the notion of a mobile curator and, as such, mobile cultural subjects operate as mediators, or intermediary agents, of certain forms of representation, within a given exhibition context and the superstructure of the international cultural economy²⁹. The nomadic curators align themselves with this outwardly looking process, and are perceived as agents of global culture. This assumption gets compounded by the misconception that curators who travel have a more comprehensive world view³⁰. Yet, those on an urban scale, mediating between new institutionalist cells, need to be at one with the overall contemporary arts landscape of their city. They become ‘agents for hire’ so to speak, where engagement is self-initiated, or a collaboration between fellow practitioners. A sense of there being a coherent relationship between place and identity³¹ re-emerges as a consequence, and further demands to inwardly respond collaboratively, yet, stimulating discourse within our urban frameworks arises. In the city where new institutionalist cells prevail, the opportunity afforded to nomadic curatorship, allows for an alignment within differing formats and actants. They become important ‘transmitters’ between institutions, lending themselves as mediators to the cities new cultural make-up of differing communities. Where networks and territory’s of the city are perceived as fragmented, and new institutionalist organizations are particular to each community, the role of the curator seeks to disseminate and expand knowledge between these cells. It allows for the curatorial practice to move beyond hegemonic elements and transmit throughout the urban scale. Frameworks become curated,

where cities cultural exchange and competency is familiarized. New institutionalism become important stations of exchange and collaboration with the cities contemporary arts framework. This factor resonates the words of *Möntmann*³² where curatorial practice becomes a vehicle for opposing institutions and communities, where urban frameworks are ‘...reconciling their hierarchical structures of organization with the flexible, partially decentralized and transnational flows of culture, finance and labour’. It also exemplifies the notion that curatorial practice becoming restricted by institutionalism, acting as a locus for contemporary arts engagement of the city. New institutionalism facilitates liberation from these restrictions, allowing for engagement within its context and community, mentioned previously by curatorial group, *WTHW*.

‘...the main task of a curator (...) would be to create the context, the discursive and physical space for reflection, a temporary point in which all these parallel processes are collected, contested, intensified and enhanced. For our curatorial work of key importance is the articulation of sensitive social issues, especially in relation to the local context.’³³

But for all the sensitivity over territories, fragmentation and autonomous curating, new institutionalism has an important impact on the urban framework. Unfortunately, in practice, the desired network of exchange has yet to be implemented fully between the larger and the smaller institution. Our urban frameworks are highly susceptible to outside factors, where sense of place and identity can be eradicated by fiscal, political and provincial motivations. Audiences have never been more aware, due to the availability of technology and globalization; yet, the opportunity to engage and respond meaningfully isn’t always obvious. By highlighting the presence new institutionalism can adopt within our frameworks, the overall landscape culturally can only begin to expand. Curatorial motivations to programme within and interact with as many actants as possible, emits engagement and concern for its surroundings. The urban framework becomes curated and interstitial spaces become rejuvenated organically, and engrained within the communities that make up the city.

Conclusion

In order to bring this paper to a close, and assess the research explored previously, it is worth highlighting initial motivations. It was hoped that findings would bridge, or at least, draw closer, the various strands that contribute towards the notion of a curated, non-institutionalized city. New institutionalism, urban frameworks and curatorial practice, behave independently, yet, have the capability to intertwine and interact between themselves and influence beyond their own avenues. Nevertheless, in the contemporary arts world, new institutionalism is the prevailing factor and the source of this research. The marrying between new institutionalism, curatorial practice and urban frameworks sought to offer a solution, or more so, a window into how these avenues operate together, and react towards the external factors of the contemporary arts world. In the wake of these avenues of interrogation, factors such as globalization, new technologies, recessionary and hegemony operate and contribute towards, and against, new institutionalism, urban frameworks and curatorial practice. The city becomes a fragile environment where these avenues jostle to co-exist, leading to an atmosphere that becomes susceptible to fragmentation and without cultural competency. The factors that contribute towards an idea of the curated city, made up of non-institutionalized spaces, are changing continually; but also begin to change audience and practitioners roles. Extending beyond the institutional parameters and architectural elements, this paper began to focus on a wider scale, exploring initiatives and strategies that encompassed the city

and boundaries that can usually obstruct contemporary arts.

Chapter one dealt with issues imposed upon galleries such the increased dependence of emerging technologies. Throughout time this has altered the way artistic practitioners have implemented ideas to be explored, interrogated and exhibited. Practices and technology has become intrinsically linked, and have focused the institution and curatorial practice to act accordingly and respond to such leaps forward. As an extension of such dependencies, the issue of the internet and social networks affords art to be created and explored on varying scales; both of virtual exploration, and of varying scales. The era where anyone can interact, encounter and create is upon us; and the virtual networks that audiences utilize create a globalized society where exchange of ideas can be made at the touch of the button. The centralized institution no longer holds a monopoly as the emitter of contemporary cultural exchange. The supposed 'shrinkage' of our world through virtual networks affords globalization to contribute towards how audiences interact and engage within contemporary arts. Audiences can dip in and out and dictate their own level of engagement, and this is where new institutionalism begins to operate successfully. It begins to merge networks and behave differently as an arts institution. The fixed locus of a centralized institution, i.e., the building, at the heart of the city, changes realms of museology. An autonomous approach with a focus of participatory engagement begins to emerge where actants involved begin to behave differently in order to engage and supplement the new institution. Agents interact on a face-to-face level through exhibitions, seminars, off-site engagements, production, participation and institutional collaboration, but also on a virtual level, through the internet, twitter, facebook and other social networks. Thereby, new institutionalism and its actants, become interactive powerful transmitters of knowledge and cultural engagement, where a focus on audience is supplemented by autonomous, yet collaborative participation. This affords new institutionalism to become reactionary, community-based agents that are at the forefront of new artistic and exhibitionary endeavours. Again, as a pivotal element to new institutionalist thinking, curatorial practice cedes traditional curator authority, and lends itself to a participatory approach for engagement. The curatorial role evolves, thereby audiences become empowered and gain a more developed and sensitive meaning to arts engagement.

New institutionalism fosters a wave of cultural trust between its audience, community and practitioners.

Chapter two followed from chapter one's focus on engagement and development in the arts world and addresses exhibitionary formats that have challenged the traditional. In the wake of technological advancements and audience participation, exhibitionary typologies have also followed suit and diverged from the standard gallery-based norm. Globalization is again a key factor; lending its suitability to a wave of biennialism. Biennials seek to encompass divergent exhibitionary practices and are vehicles that are attractive to governments and larger institutions. It allows larger institutions and varied strands of curatorial engagement to interact within an urban framework, affording opportunities for new practitioners from different cultural backgrounds to interact within the urban grain. Biennials also transmit the notion of a democratized contemporary arts environment, where curatorial authority seeks to engender differing typologies of display and interrogation; this often appropriates the urban grain and utilizes forgotten spaces and architectural elements for the purpose of new exhibitions. Yet, biennials cater to a larger and elitist strain of contemporary arts, whereas new institutionalism embraces divergent exhibitionary typologies. The contemporary arts world is shifting, and new institutionalism recognizes this. Again, through autonomously engaging within the city and their communities, new institutionalism democratizes its style of curating, where initiatives that has participation and off-site interactions is core to varying exhibitions, and strategic programming. A focus towards fusion and synergy acts as a catalyst for arts programming, where transparent and accessible initiatives begin to form from audience interaction. Dialogues are formed by those involved, and curatorial practice transforms its role; becoming a conduit for new ideas, alleviated from their previous incarnation of solitary authoritative meaning-makers. Projects such as *Auto-Stop* or *Nowhereisland* seek to become more than just 'exhibits'; they are core to new institutionalism's fusion of performative, interactive and productive qualities. New dimensions of exhibitions begin to form, encompassing memory, documentation, virtual and subsequent re-presentation. New institutionalisms make-up within the community and its formation as an organization caters to these dimensions, transmitting its curatorial practice through avenues of building, community,

varied programming and virtual presence. Their autonomous, yet, collaborative existence, allows new institutionalist to become identifiable institutions, but without a central locus of architectural iconography. A delicate balance of becoming engrained within communities, through participative audiences and actants, and as powerful meaning transmitting vehicles, is fostered through off-site engagements, but also as community collaborators.

For all of new institutionalisms embracing of community and audience participation, the larger institutions' proclivity to parallel curatorial approaches, and engage beyond their normal pedagogical practices. Chapter three addressed initiatives that sought to diverge contemporary museology practice. Biennialism is the favourite medium, and previously discussed in chapter two, however there are some progressive institutions where engagement and participation is created in order to dictate future curatorial practices. Ready to be tarnished with 'contextual curating', the larger institutions motivations to move outside of their cube, presents engagements susceptible to politicization; creed, race, gender, and class, all seek to obstruct such initiatives. The issue of marginalizing the urban framework that supports the institution is rife, and is perhaps the reasoning behind reduced off-site engagements. Nevertheless, museums and galleries work hard to foster relationships between institution and audience, and initiatives such as *Slow Boat* and *Art Maps*, are examples of this. *Slow Boat* exemplifies off-site engagement as it both fosters participation and institutional awareness, while also embracing peripheries that may usually be ignored. *Slow Boat*, *Art Maps* and *Media Lounge* all are examples of ceding curatorial authority in order to dictate future curated goals. It also affords the opportunity for varying communities to engage and contribute towards museology on a relatively, small and accessible scale; inwardly replicating the urban frameworks' scale. Nevertheless, the centralized institution of note suffers an identity crisis, at odds with contemporary societies view of the elitist organization, and the favouring of organic and sustainable initiatives. The larger institution appears to be programmatically at arms length from ground-level new institutionalism, yet no network of exchange exists to shape and collaborate between themselves. *L'Internationale* is an approach to collaboration that extends over national boundaries and cultural identities, and could serve as a blueprint for the urban environment. Organizations must work harder to foster such networks; virtual

or face-to-face. The city is a delicate blend of communities where sole representation is impossible. Curatorial practice should seek to collaborate and afford opportunities for new strategies and enterprise. A series of autonomous satellites orbiting the museocentric cultural fulcrum, has its benefits for equal representation, yet presents the opportunity for cultural competency to flourish, creating an ever-changing and responsive contemporary arts environment. The urban framework can allow these networks to exist, while drawing peripheral communities closer together.

Fragmentation of our urban frameworks was a key factor discussed throughout chapter four. As the final effort to collate the aforementioned chapters and to address curating the city as non-institutionalized space, the fragmented urban grain began to take hold. In an environment where capitalist and globalizing motivations are rife, divides between communities begin to exist. The favouring of virtual networks and become hermetically sealed audiences shape communicatory networks and interchange. Loopholes between fragmented elements of the city manage to segregate themselves from others, creating strong identities of locality within the urban framework. New institutionalist endeavours are guilty of becoming entwined with such locality. Emerging as powerful cultural and participative conduits within communities, they become the 'laboratory, community centre and academy' resonant to its surroundings. However, it isn't new institutionalism's fault. Their organic growth is a by-product of their inherent stationing within localities. Yet, when casting an eye on the larger urban scale, patterns emerge that fragment the city more and more. The autonomy between locality and their new institutionalist motivations has a domino effect where fragmentation occurs; a deterritorialization of our urban frameworks begins. Nevertheless, this systematic issue bears a positive character trait. Perceived deterritorialization of the urban grain also allows for a reprogramming of cultural competency and sensitivity into its communities where larger institutions may not be able to reach. As a consequence, the make-up of new institutionalist cells creates an urban framework that resembles a 'test-bed' or laboratory, which only serves to replicate virtual experimentation, but also as a culturally conducive network.

New institutionalisms preference to reutilize interstitial spaces to house themselves, i.e. redundant architecture, transmits cultural

concern within the community. Again, audiences resonate with this, improving organic growth and representation within the locality. As a by-product, communities become sustainable and regenerate from within. The urban framework becomes a series of heterotopian communities, where curatorial practice is pragmatic, fostering mobility and collaborative community practice. Curators become agents of representation, aligning themselves to new and emerging practitioners. Their roles become engrained in ground-level practitioners' artistic motivations. By their positioning within new institutionalism, and the collaborative non-hierarchical environment they operate from, allows a coherent relationship to form between curatorial practice, urban frameworks and contemporary arts actants. Discourses between new institutionalism and communities form, and the urban framework is alleviated from authoritative roles, manifesting opportunities for networks of cultural interchange and collaboration.

The realms of new institutionalism, urban frameworks and curatorial practice are divergent areas of research with their own pitfalls and positives. The notion of curating the city as non-institutionalized space was considered initially as an accidental coincidence, but also, new institutionalism as a contemporary arts trend; subject to falling away and large organizational pressure. It was assumed that the environment we witness today of the centralized museum or gallery orbited by a series of new institutionalist initiatives, engrained within their communities and self-absorbed in their own programming, but also at the whim of curatorial practice. However, the formation of new institutionalism and its operation is completely dependant on communities and audiences. Resonant of museological problems of engagement and footfall, new institutionalism manages to morph itself as a contemporary arts conduit for society, while encouraging and supporting collaborative and emerging divergent forms of practice. Curatorial practice is dependant on its associates, and cedes authority in favour of interdisciplinary working. The resultant networks that are formed through involvement, engagement, collaboration, merging of practices, community partnerships, off-site and forward-thinking exhibitions. Consequently, the urban framework is subject to a 'domino' effect, where new institutionalism becomes integral to an overall cultural competency and curated city. As urban frameworks evolve and are subject to globalization and capitalist motivations, it is no longer sustainable for a centralized

institution or series of contemporary arts organizations of note to hold court over the city's urban grain. Audience participation morphs and is no longer reliant on footfall; the availability to contemporary art forms increases continually. The opportunity afforded to audiences is prevalent through virtual networks, but also via new institutionalism. Thereby, different forms of artistic expression begin to emerge in communities throughout the city, and consequently the curated city begins.

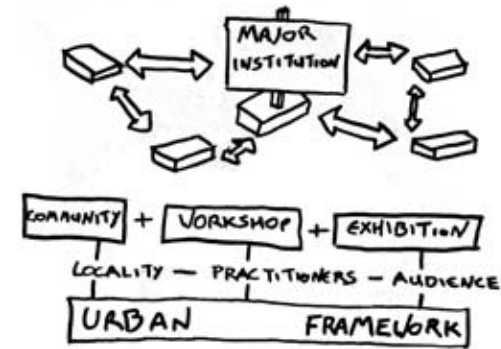


Fig 16: *An urban framework in cultural exchange – a city curated as non-institutionalized space.*

Final Recommendations

In order to further this theory, the opportunity to engage within a new institutionalist organization, or, inversely, an outward engagement from the larger institution would be recommended. This could take the form of a series of mini-engagements and dialogues between practitioners and community discussions. It was hoped for some curator engagement throughout this research; however, this did not come to fruition. Nevertheless, the goal of answering whether or not the city is now curated as non-institutionalized space, is one that needs time in order to be examined further. This could feed into a time-based examination of the urban framework and curatorial typologies and movements throughout the city. The passing of time would also hopefully dictate the extent of external factors such as the recession or funding parameters on different scale institutions. It has also been noting throughout that the research would take on a different dimension if it was context-specific. Cities on the

larger scale, such as *Bristol* or *London*, are more capable subjects for such research, yet above all, the research is dependant on audience engagement and participation. The urban framework can only facilitate its existence through a proactive and engaged audience. A collective conscience of cultural competency is an opportunity that shouldn't be ignored. Perhaps passive curating of the city isn't the answer. Aggressively curating spaces through new institutionalist endeavours may cohesively re-appropriate the city for its audience. Only time will tell.

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